LEGENDS

OF THE RHINE

AND OF

THE LOW COUNTRIES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "HIGHWAYS AND BY WAYS".

'All thynges in this Boke that ye shall rede,
Doe as ye lyst there shall no mann you binde
Them to beleue as surely as your cre*
But notwithstandinge certes in my mynde,
I durst well swere, as true ye shall them fynde,
In euery poynt eche answere by and by,
As are the iudgmentes of astrologye — SIR THOMAS MORE

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Stories are gathered from various sources; and some of them are freely adapted from the literature of the countries where the scenes are laid. The "*Bijdragen tot het oude Strafreg in Belgie*:" the "*Chroniques et Traditions Surnaturelles de la Flandre*:" and the German Legendary Tales have furnished the subjects of several. For others it might not be easy to give any authority beyond these volumes. But it is hoped that they will be read with that confiding good faith, which prefers taking things for granted to sifting evidence or comparing proofs.

The Author's chief object in dealing with the Rhine Legends was to pass over such as turned on magic or enchantment, and to choose those

which embodied motives or passions merely mortal. He has admitted but one exception to this rule, and that only because human feeling was there predominant over fairy spells.

One of the Stories had been already made the subject of a poem which appeared several years ago, but which was soon afterwards suppressed.

Schlierbach, Valley of the Neckar.
July, 18[illegible].

CONTENTS

OF THE FIRST VOLUME

THE

FORFEIT HAND.

LEGEND OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.



THE

FORFEIT HAND.

A LEGEND OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

Yolenta de Melna, the dame of Corteryke, sat surrounded by her maidens, in the large chamber appropriated to their hand-work, on the ground-floor of the old castle which gave the lady her title. The building, coarse, massive, and inelegant in architecture and decoration, was situated in the marshes about a league from the city of Ghent, close to the village of Zwinarde, and within the jurisdiction of the Abbey of St. Peter, one of the most important endowments in the diocese of Tournay, which at the period of our story, the beginning of the fifteenth century, extended far over Brabant, and penetrated even into Flanders. And often did the fat oxen of Abbot Gerald, which in good neighbourhood and

fair play should have kept within the pale of the church pastures, crush with the harsh hoof of ecclesiastical power the ill-trimmed fences of Corteryke Park, and make unseemly riot among the sheep and kine which browsed or chewed the cud under its spacious elms.

These violations of territory were the subject of frequent dispute between the seneschal of the castle and Christopher de Roden, the abbot's head bailiff. But a more serious cause of remonstrance on the part of the dame, and of retort on that of the churchman, was produced by human trespasses on the bounds created to keep them asunder —the sure method by which near neighbours might be kept fast friends. There was, in short, little doubt, (and great was the scandal,) that sundry lay-brothers of St. Benedict, the order of the Abbey occupants, had from time to time encouraged their cattle to stray into the castle domains, as a pretext for their own intrusion among the pretty damsels who worked at the looms and wielded the distaffs of the dame.

As often as the latter complained to the superior, she was sure to receive a reproach on the score of her handmaidens' levity, to which he

paternally attributed any little amatory sharp-shooting that might possibly pass between the male and female skirmishers. But like a true shepherd he never failed on these occasions to send one or more of the monks to keep order among the introduced wanderers of the flock. Yet this only made matters worse. It was roundly asserted that the clerical brethren were little better than the lay ones; and it was certain that two of the former were on different nights caught prowling about the dark avenues which skirted the wings of the castle, while double that number of maidens had, during one short summer, given evidence of symptoms that according to law should be conjugal.

The strictures of the gossips might have been libel, which in those days meant calumny, but is now construed truth. But whatever was the issue of these affairs, it was laid at the door of the monks, and such was their effrontery and their power, that they openly took in the reproach, and scorned the censures of the world. But no matter! we have little now to do with those pious propagators of the gospel, those holy hypocrites of the olden time. Many a hand has

dragged aside the veil of their misdoings. For our parts, we are not at present disposed to rake up the ashes of their reputation, nor is it our care to sift the few grains of seed from the chaff of their morality. We have now to deal only with the chief, whose character was, at the period in question, free from the stigmas that stuck so close to the younger members of the fraternity. The religious father in God, Lord Geraldus, as he is called in the documents which furnish our labours, was now in the vale of life, far on the downward slope, where passion's sun rarely warms the gloom of prejudice, and where men fancy themselves chaste because they find themselves chill.

No terms of neighbourhood could be more hostile than those between the Abbot of St. Peter and the lady of Corteryke. Prolific causes of ill will, besides those above alluded to, existed. They hated each other with all the cordiality of Christians who never failed to say mass or hear it at regular times. But their hatred was of shades as different as their characters. The lady's was impetuous, uncompromising, and candid; the priest's crafty, cautious, and mean. Scarcely a day

ever passed without the proud Yolenta openly uttering sarcasm against the abbot,—ay, and curse too, when anger called for an especial vent: and as regularly did the holy Gerald put up public prayers towards Heaven, (too faint to go many stages of the journey), for the conversion of "his well beloved daughter and fair neighbour, the choleric dame of Corteryke."

And we must confess the fact. She *was* quick and fiery of temper, even beyond the too common weakness of those high spirits which wage war with fortune. Her main fault is now told: a somewhat unusual way of introducing a heroine to one's readers, but it was well to state at once the chief trait of character on which our story hinges, and without the development of which, on one important occasion, Yolenta Van Corteryke, otherwise de Melna, had never gained a niche in the Chronicles, nor formed a heroine in the Legends of the Low Countries.

We said just now that she *sat* among her damsels. We recall the term. It would imply a steadiness of manner and habit which was very foreign from hers. She sat down occasionally no doubt, but in her usual way she *moved*

among them rather, presided, overlooked, bustled through the sedentary ranks with her wonted vivacity, and encouraged the industrious or reproved the idle with an air of prompt authority peculiarly her own.

"Verily, my good Babette," said she with a smile, and tapping the cheek of the girl to whom she spoke, "that is a neat piece of stitching. The wimple that is made by thy finger-work deserves to be worn with a robe of honor. Well done, Dorchie," continued she, addressing another who plied the embroidering needle at a loom close by, "it is thus a stomacher should be studded—the pearls are quaintly placed, and the braiding fairly proportioned. But eh! what in the name of St. Bavon have we here?" exclaimed she, briskly turning to a loitering wench who held her distaff awry, and was casting smirking looks out of the window.

"Is this what must pass for spinning in the opening of the fifteenth century? Is it thus a thread should be twisted and knotted that was meant for a sandal web as fine as Cyprus lawn? How would our mothers have stared at such modern degeneracy? So, Bettye, your eyes

must be fixed for ever on that grinning red-headed rascal who leers through the park paling? The curse of St. Martin be on him and his insolent compeers, and their hypocritical old hierarch to boot, who sets on his lazy herd to infect my wenches after this fashion! So, you will not answer me? you will not confess your fault, but hang your head down, and look as red as your own mantle of ingrain cloth? Very well!" continued the dame, still more wroth at her handmaid's silence, for nothing increases gratuitous ire so much as submission, while a brisk retort often makes it die away as a sound in its own echo. "Very well, Bettye; this stubbornness shall have its reward. You expect, no doubt, to go to Zwinarde next Wednesday, to witness the procession of the holy blood. But I promise you, your mantle shall hang on its peg, and no bodkin fasten your hood that day. What!" continued the choleric dame, turning again towards the window, "he is there still. Is this to be borne? Is Yolenta de Melna to be stared and grinned at by the scurvy menial of a bloated priest? Where is the seneschal? Let my men

at arms turn out, and drive away yon foxy-pated loon. Where is the seneschal, I say?"

"Please you, dame," replied one of the maids, "master Roger van Oatternyk has ridden over to Dolislaegher, to gather in the geese and turkey tallies which fall due to day."

"Indeed! and is this the way the service of Corteryke is performed? Is the seneschal to do the duty of the bailiff, and the bailiff that of the cook, mayhap? Where is Van Kulmar?"

"It seemeth, my gracious lady, that you are pleased to forget"—

"No, wench, I am not pleased to forget either my own bidding or myself. I am wroth with myself and all about me. Nay, nay, you need not tell me that Berlo van Kulmar is gone to the notary about that last new proceeding of the odious De Roden.—I remember it now. Therefore, since the superior officers are abroad, let the lowest of the menials attend me. Call Kobus."

"Oh, my fair mistress!" exclaimed one of the women, in real or affected horror.

"Kobus!" echoed several of the others.

"Gracious lady!" said the forymost of these

female familiars, "how can you breathe such a thought?—Can the dame of Corteryke condescend to call the attendance of such a fellow as Kobus, while serving-men and grooms throng the halls and stables—or while her faithful handmaidens are all ready to do her bidding, be it what it may, and what woman's powers may do? Dear lady, we wait the word of your commands."

"I dare say, ye do impatiently. No doubt, ye would joyously set out to encounter the profane flatteries of that ill-favoured hedge loiterer and his base associates, or perchance to fall in with some prowling hypocrite in cowl and coif, and give cause to new scandal from their foul mouthed abbot, whom I scorn to call holy or reverend. No, damsels! ye stir not an inch beyond the walls to-day; nor shall any but Kobus be sullied by the ignoble task of driving off yon trespasser. Let the scullion boy attend me."

From this peremptory order there was no appeal. In a few minutes the individual alluded to in terms of such unequivocal dishonour, made his appearance at the chamber door, and justified the contemptuous astonishment of the maidens.

He was a most ungainly and unfashioned lump of humanity; a Flemish boor of the first water, rough from his native swamps, and rather retarded than advanced in any chance of polishing by his recent promotion from the court-yard to the scullery. He had become, in consequence, the butt of the servants, high as well as low; and the refinement of kitchen wit, compared to stable scurrility, had so completely addled its subject, that he was fast losing, in his in-door associations, the scanty stock of his former ideas. Hurried about from morning till night, badgered, bamboozled, and buffeted without mercy, he was accustomed to run, or rather reel along, at the repeated summonses, which sometimes came so thick upon him from the wicked wit of the upper menials, that he was frequently kept in a state that seemed to solve the problem of the perpetual motion, and prove the possibility of ubiquity. Called now by a dozen voices which echoed the commands of the dame through the corridors, halls, and passages, and into the penetralia of the scullery, Kobus ran off "accoutred as he was," but unjerkined and unwashed in the direction of the sounds; and duly arrived half breathless and

bewildered at the entrance of the chamber where his mistress awaited him. He was accompanied on his course by roars of laughter from the lazy servants who loitered on his passage, and a tittering chorus from the working maidens received him at the term of his course.

"Kobus!" exclaimed the dame, as she saw him appear. At the sound of her soft yet authoritative voice, he plunged instinctively forward, then stood fixed in astounded veneration on finding into what a presence he was now for the first time not only suffered but ordered to appear. He waited awhile with gaping mouth, staring eyes, and outstretched arms, brawny and bare to the elbows, one hand wielding a frying pan, and the other the impure clout with which he had been scouring it. For some seconds the lady's voice buzzed in his ears, and her form danced before him; but as he gradually recovered his senses, and she emphatically repeated her words, he began to comprehend her meaning and his own duty.

"Dislodge, and drive him away," said the dame following up her orders. "Seize the goeden-

dag * which hangs in the hall, or the gagne-pain from over the pantry door, and chastise the daring loon; or wheel out the little springall from the porchway, and discharge a dozen darts or stones at his flaming pate. Quick, Kobus, and do my bidding well; and by this hand and my lady of grace, I will dub thee knight on the field of honour!"

The lady's gravity could no longer keep its bounds. She burst fairly out into a fit of laughter, as she saw the grotesque delight of her champion. The maidens, free from restraint, now pealed a merry chorus; they broke up from their seats, capered and danced at the prospective fun, and thronged round the half-witted scullion, whose first impulse of enthusiasm was to fall down on both knees, and fling himself prostrate at Yolenta's feet.

"Rise, rise, Sir Kobus," cried the dame.

* *Goeden-dag* (good morning) a peculiar sort of pike. *Gagne-pain*, bread-earner, a huge sword so called, the common weapon of the Flemish foot soldier in those days. *Springall*, a machine for throwing various kinds of missiles.

striking his shoulder a smart stroke of a distaff which she snatched from the stool on which its late careless holder had thrown it. "Rise up, good knight, to great feats of chivalry and deeds of fame!"

"Rise up then, sluggard! Be quick and valiant, booby!" exclaimed the maidens, pushing with their sandal-covered feet the uninviting carcass they scorned to touch with their fingers. Their wild frolic knew no bounds. The lady had given them their cue. The quick transition of her temper from serious to light was nothing unusual. Her attendants, who humoured her in every mood, gave way to their own levity whenever hers broke loose, and a dozen wild and girlish pranks were now the consequence. In a few minutes the newly-dubbed parody on chivalry was fitted out at all points. He passively lay, or knelt, or stood, as suited the whim of his equippers. An osier basket covered his head by way of casque; the faded and fag-end of a torn curtain was flung scarfwise over his shoulder, and tied in a bunch at one side. A couple of huge knitting needles were stuck in his shoe heels for spurs, a wooden tray tied to

his left arm as a buckler; and a long house broom placed in his right hand, a lance with which he was commanded to sweep the territory of the castle clear of the intrusive rubbish which had given rise to this undignified if not indecorous scene.

Of all who acted in and enjoyed it, the late so serious and peremptory dame was the foremost. She laughed the loudest, and took the most active part of any; and when the accoutering was completed, she seemed the most impatient to witness the result of the freak.

Sir Kobus was now hailed with a general roar of joy, and driven out grinning and capering, and not unaffected by the glee of which he was negatively the author.

"Vlanderen den leeuw! Slae doodt, slae doodt!"* vociferated he, as he rolled sidewise out of the room and along the corridor that led to the drawbridge, just beyond which lay the meadow, in the green hedge whereof the carroty head of the lay brother was still stuck, while his

*"*Flanders and the Lion!* Kill dead! Kill dead!" The first the Flemish war-cry; the latter that of the house of Corteryke, and somewhat Irish in its construction.

leering physiognomy showed no consciousness of the attack so visibly preparing for him. The windows of the borduercn kammer*, which looked on the moat that surrounded the castle, were all soon garnished with the laughing faces of the maidens. The lady herself occupied a prominent place; and all the indoor servants, among whom the news soon spread, poured out from every passage to witness the issue of the adventure.

The chronicles of Flanders do not state the minute particulars of Sir Kobus's attack on the lay-brother, nor the means of defence used by the latter. But a short quotation from an old English work, descriptive of an affair between two combatants, furnishes, in lively and appropriate phrase, a very good notion of this. "Well, sur, they soon set to argue the point cum face to face. Very feerse both t'one and t'oother. If one plucked by the thrate, t'other, with havers woold claw him by the scalp. Thearfore thus, each fending and proovying with plucking and lugging, skralling and byting, by plain tooth

* Embroidery room.

and nayll, a t'one side and t'oother. Such expens of blood and leather was thear between them as a month's licking I wean wold not recover. It was a sport verrie pleazunt to see, one with his pinkings and leering after t'oother's approache. If he wear bitten in one place hoow he woold pynch in another; and if he wear taken oncz, then what shyft with byting, clawing, roryng, tossyng, and tumblyng, he coold worke to wynde hymselfe away. And when he was loose, to shake his ears twyse or thryse with the blood and salver about his *fiznamy*, was a matter of a goodlie reliefe."

This to be sure is the description of a fight between a bear and a dog; but the imperfect state of science in Flanders in those days (and it is but little improved in our own) left small, if any, difference in the conflicts of men or beasts, except those wherein the champions of chivalry had a right to kill each other in a gentlemanly manner.

The result of the battle is recorded: Sir Kobus was totally discomfited: neither his valour, nor skill, nor the inspiration of his cause, were sufficient to resist the lay-brother's obsti-

nacy and superior strength. Monastic dependents were too well fed, and too conscious of their consequence, not to possess great advantages in a conflict with a secular adversary, be he who he might; and it is certain that on this occasion Sir Kobus was cruelly unnerved by his enemy's whispered threats (enforcing every thump) of church vengeance and its horrors.

Interference was at length necessary to save Sir Kobus from strangulation, for the victorious lay-brother having finally succeeded in getting him undermost in the boundary ditch, grappled his throat so unmercifully with both hands, that death must have ensued had his grasp not been loosened. This movement, so fortunate for the sake of Sir Kobus, was accomplished in and by the twinkling of an eye. Bettye, the most careless and coquetish of dame Yolenta's spinning Jennies, knowing the power of her glance on her pugnacious admirer, implored the lady to suffer her to sally forth to Sir Kobus's relief. The lady, though indignant and somewhat ashamed at her champion's defeat, had no wish that he should die in a ditch; she therefore gave her consent, and Bettye, resolved to prove that she

loathed the red-headed pretender to her smiles, hastily arranged a plan of punishment with her companions, which she left them to communicate to the dame.

Darting from the chamber—flying through the corridor—whisking across the drawbridge—and arrived at the place of combat, she excited the attention of the lay-brother, who sat astride the prostrate body of his enemy, by giving him a no daintily dealt whack across the shoulders with Sir Kobus's broken weapon. Turning suddenly round at the summons, the victor saw close beside him one of those very eyes (Bettye looked at him *en profile*) which had been the original cause of his quarrel. At the sight he relinquished his hold of Kobus, and following the beckon of the deceiver, he fawningly traced her steps towards the castle, as though her eye had been of onyx whose magnetic magic is well known—or was in those days—to every believer in the black art, which priests and their satellites were, *ex officio*.

Scarcely arrived at a large and gloomy clump of cypress and yew, which stood among the cheerless decorations close to the moat, the luck-

less lay-brother saw himself in a moment surrounded by a group of the mischief-meaning damsels, who had repaired thither with full consent of the dame, in pursuance of their plot. Before time was afforded for conjecture, much less for defence, Bettye flung her scarf round the body of her victim, and aided by Dorchie, Babette, and the rest, bound his arms effectively. Then the whole developing a blanket of most capacious size, caught it at sides and corners with such a grasp as was befitting to damsels nourished in the fashion of those sinew-bracing days *.

In a moment the lay-brother was rolled down, and in another he was tossed to the height of the topmost branches of the yew-trees hard by. At every elastic bound the arms of the execu-

* We at this moment recollect Sancho's treatment by the Spanish wenches. Even so. That neither proves us to be plagiarists nor discredits *our* adventure; on the contrary, it confirms the chronicles, for there is little doubt that Cervantes heard the story of Sir Kobus from some of the Flemish allies who fought with him at Lepanto, and that he wove into his satire one of the incidents which properly belonged to *our* legend, and which we therefore reclaim and appropriate.

tioners seemed stronger, and their hearts harder. The more he roared, the more they laughed. Sir Kobus, who had slunk off towards the stables, and had been well pumped on by a friendly groom, now came chuckling forward, and gave a helping hand; while sundry of the varlets were not slow in relieving the panting damsels; the dame herself being the while a delighted witness of the sport from the nearest window of the castle.

But loud as was the laughter, the cries for mercy, and the shouts of execration and contempt, which burst from the various parties, they were all out-noised by the harsh and sudden utterance of a tremendous oath which scattered dismay into the ranks of the servants, (Sir Kobus himself included,) put the maidens to flight with screams and shrieks, and procured the lay-brother a timely respite from his torture.

"Sacred thunder—devils—and storm gusts!"* vociferated the terrible voice of Christopher de Roden, the high bailiff of the abbot Gerald, as

* This is the nearest approach we can make to the translation of an oath which is much more sublime in the original Flemish.

he rose up in the stirrups of his charger, or war horse, and thrust his head and half his body, both being, as was their wont, in almost the full accoutrements of war, over the hedge which separated him and some half dozen armed followers from the scene we have described.

"What do I see?" cried he, "a lay brother of St. Benedict tossed in a blanket! Sacrilegious hands desecrating the church property? Monstrous, monstrous! and frightful will be the punishment to all concerned! Get up Claesman Blittersburgel! come out of the bounds of this hell-gap of Corteryke! What the fiend brought you into that pickle? and how did this happen? Ah, dame, this is the worst of your wild pranks! All that has gone before is as naught—The fourteen suits depending in the episcopal senate of Tournay between you and his reverence may be now abandoned—the fine of a hundred and fifty Paris livres for cutting the tail of the black tithe pig—the mulct of four *moutons d'or* for muddying the waters of the perch-pond—the penalty of the sixty wax tapers to St. Bavon's shrine for the snow-balls pelted last winter at father Ysenbaert—these

and many more, the prices for the irreverent, spiteful, unsanctified doings of your people, instigated by you and the foul fiend together—all may be now forgotten—an outrage like this cancels all, as a mortal sin swallows up a dozen peccadillos; vengeance and woe to the dame of Corteryke! The ban of the church and anathema be on her and her household, of every sex and age! This I speak in the name of my holy lord spiritual, the mitred abbot of St. Peter.——Why in the devil's name, I say again, Claesman Blittersbrugel, dost thou lie log-like therein that sink of iniquity, with thy blanket about thee as though thou slept there at ease instead of being most uneasily tossed therein?"

"Oh, valiant Herr Christopher, noble de Roden, chief of the feudal men of our reverend liege lord Gerald! I am not able to move—I am dislocated and bejellied from blade-bone to anklet. It is well my neck has been spared; every other member is disjointed, and my bones ache most fearfully. Take me hence I prithee, ere those vixen miscreants, those impure harpies, pounce on me again; for sure I am that the siren-like deceiver, Bettye, has sworn my de-

struction at the shrine of the false gods to whom she and her sister mermaids offer up service."

"Nay, Claesman, I cannot, in due point of law, cross this mere-dyke even for thy rescue. Such a step might invalidate our right of justice on the perpetrators of this heinous deed. But lie thou there in peace of mind, let thy bodily discomfort be what it may. Should these cannibals return when I am gone, and slay thee outright, thou shalt have full justice. I promise thee that, on the dignity and honour of the abbey of St. Peter."

A piteous groan was the answer to this assurance.

"And moreover I shall forthwith betake me to his reverence the divine Gerald, and engage that he shall say a mass for thy soul within an hour,—myself vowing in the name of the martyrs, and taking your old comrade here, John de Weck, as witness, to bear the charge of the tolling of bells, and of the priests' and choristers' tapers, at my own private cost. So peace to thee, Claesman, shouldst thou, as all appearances promise, die soon and unshriven."

"Ah, graceless and heartless De Roden!

well did I deem that such would have been thy conduct in this case!" exclaimed Yolenta, as the bailiff turned aside his horse's head and prepared to move away. "What brave champions of church wrong, and spoliation, and oppression! Art thou then afraid of a houseful of women—thou, and thy swordsmen, and thy lazy troop of monks, and all thy vile appurtenances! By my soul and by St. Bavon's shrine, I should have honoured thee, instead of opposing and prosecuting, hadst thou boldly broken bounds to the rescue of thy fellow there! But thou art sunk in new disgrace by this cowardly abandonment of him. I invite thee and thy followers. Come over and take away that justly punished intruder, who dared to thrust his red pole like a fire-brand into the combustible materials of Coteryke. Take him away, and I give thee the blanket wherewith to carry him off, as a token of remembrance to him and the crew ye belong to, of what awaits the insolent interlopers who put a hair of their head into my domain."

As Yolenta spoke, the bailiff listened attentively, an involuntary air of respect mingling with the look of insolent defiance which he was

forcing up. He paused a few seconds after she had ceased, and his satellites seemed to be murmuring some words of advice. He shook his head at each suggestion, with the proper dignity of a feudal retainer to his underlings, and then addressed the lady.

"Dame of Corteryke, I have listened to and pondered your words; and I shall ask you in reply, Do you think Christopher de Roden is the dolt such words should be only addressed to? Believe you that I have served the Abbey of St. Peter seven-and-twenty years, and not learned enough to save me from being the dupe of a woman? or that I have been in daily quarrel with you and your wenches ever since your widowhood, only to fall into your snares to-day? No, no! that poor devil that lies there before my eyes is example enough, if I could be such a fool as to be caught by your fair words. And there must he lie, or die, if such be your devilish malice. Be satisfied you shall see me again to-morrow, with due form of law, to cite you to judgment for this crime; but at this face of the hedge I have justice on my side."

Injustice and roguery, and cowardice and

cruelty are at whichever side may shelter Christopher de Roden," retorted the dame in high tone; "and to make the medley complete, impudence, ugliness, and rank rascality shall be added. Hark ye, my serving-men, wrap up yon filthy fellow in the coverlet which his vile carcass has polluted, and roll him over the mere-dyke, and into the abbey lands. Let Master de Roden bear him off to the abbot, and tell him he would do well to beware how he shows even *his* priestly cap over my bounds."

"Beware, dame!" cried De Roden in great ire, "beware! remember that holy Gerald has ban and anathema in his power."

"Fellow, I scorn him and his ill-gotten and unholy power. Did he ban the bravo who struck down Humbert of Corteryke at the altar's foot, and stained my maiden robe with the bloody stamp of widowhood? Did he then or ever vindicate religion and justice? and dost thou, his mean minion, mumble forth threats against me now? Away wretch, or by the heart's blood of my murdered lord, I'll let loose the watch dog from the fosse upon thee and thy creatures. I give thee five minutes to bear off yon pesti-

lent fellow, and to take thee clear out of sight—away!"

With these words the angry dame retired from the window, commanding her maidens to resume their various occupations. The serving-men followed her directions, and removed the lay-brother beyond the bounds, when De Roden, placing him carefully on one of his followers' horses, rode away towards the city of Ghent, muttering terrible threats against all concerned in the transaction we have faithfully narrated.

CHAPTER II.

"Ah, Loridon! was it well in thee to throw me upon my own unruly temper for support, in a moment of mutual passion, when we were both wrong, both too hot-headed, and too warm-hearted—when a soothing word, or a kind glance from thee had smoothed all, and secured our happiness for ever! Why did thy pride prevail over thy love? What disastrous consequences have flowed from one rash step! and I—what a traitor was I to my own heart! How did I betray its best interests, for the indulgence of one weak sentiment! How sacrifice, in one maniac moment all the blessings of life! But it is now too late. The die is cast. Instead of joy and love, and all their bright enchantments, I am doomed to the basest drudgery in existence; cooped in by rules and forms, which I continually revolt against, like some imprisoned bird that flaps with ineffectual wing the bars of its cage; the current of my better feelings turned aside by the

harsh impediments of my fate; all that was gentle in my nature ruffled, and the evil parts stirred up into boisterous froth and foam, until whirlwind passion is become the only element in which my unquiet spirit can exist! I was not meant for this. Whose doing is it, Loridon, thine or mine own? No matter now. Reproaches are unavailing, of thee or of myself. My doom is cast in suffering, and I must fulfil it."

So soliloquized the lady of Corteryke, when she retired to her private chamber, after the undignified bustle was over, and when her mind, recovering from its turgid state, sunk into painful recollections of past times and events, from which she gained fresh cause for disquiet, and scarcely one element of consolation.

The passages of her life had as yet been few, for she was but in her eighteenth year. Her title of dame, her matronly rights, her tone of authority might have given other notions of her age to those who only heard of her as we have hitherto shewn her; but even those, when turning back a thought to the levity and almost indecorum we have described, will perhaps make some allowance for a high-spirited girl in a rude age;

her affection balked, her short career chequered by violent events, and she left totally to her own controul, which few even of more sober years, or in better regulated times, apply very severely against *self.*

As soon as reason began to regulate the girlish fancies of Yolenta van Melna, she was convinced that she had been right in having bestowed her whole heart, without knowing or caring what reason might think of the measure, on young Loridon van Bart, son of Johan van Bart, lord of Lettelhausen, and consequently nephew of that feudal tyrant's brother, Gerald, Abbot of St. Peter's.

The cession of her affection thus made was without the knowledge of any member of her lover's family or her own. Loridon was as cautious as herself on a point which engenders prudence in minds that on other occasions seem unsusceptible of its influence. They loved as love is best and purest, in utter secrecy; but they both paid dearly, on one painful and fatal occasion, the tax for that greatest of luxuries, and felt keenly the want of some confidant, whose friendly counsel might regulate the aberrations of youthful passion, stepping in between

lovers and the ruin they often hurry to in a paroxysm of delirious affection, or, as in this case, of unreasonable resentment.

Loridon cherished jealousy among the degrading drawbacks which were in those days considered as a part and parcel of love, as though a forced deformity were a natural accessory of the passion ! In the spirit of feudal pride, he on all occasions worked himself up to fits of suspicion, and seemed to take especial pleasure in embittering the pure chalice which nature had filled for his own and his mistress's delight. He seemed haunted by a morbid longing for their mutual misery. It was rare that a meeting, even in the delicious stealth of a twilight grove, or a moon-illumined corridor, in solitude and secrecy —love's own natural atmosphere—did not end in a quarrel on some frivolous pretext, and that the sweet hour was not defaced by frowns and taunts, reproaches and tears.

The consequence of these habitual broils was at length an actual belief, on his part, that he had reason for his ungenerous, and, in truth, his unmanly conduct. He justified it, too, by the feeling that he made himself as unhappy as her;

more so perhaps, for remorse added a sting by which she was never assailed. But she became by degrees irritable, and at times intemperate. She was ashamed of the yoke which she hugged so closely, and angry with herself as with him. She at length learned to give herself relief by retorting his reproaches, and anticipating them now and then. Her ardent mind thus opened under the influence of a tempest, for it was such, and not the soft gales of feminine affection, that Loridon had raised in her bosom. Thus the infatuated pair went on. Quarrel grew on quarrel. The deeper they loved, the more profound was their misery. They, on a dozen occasions, saw each other "for the last time," and met again and again in more torment than before, to lament the past, swear forgiveness and forgetfulness, and break away once more in a wonted fit of phrensy—for such conduct, whether in the fourteenth century or the nineteenth, is nothing short of that calamity.

At length, on one occasion of more than common absurdity and violence, Loridon swore he would set out for France, as a volunteer in the war then waging with the English invaders of

that country, and never more see Yolenta. This was a new form of a usual threat; and she met it by declaring, for the first time, that if he so abandoned her, she would instantly accept the offers of marriage (his pretext for all their quarrels) almost weekly made to her by Humbert of Corteryke, who was not only repugnant to her taste, but the sworn and hated enemy of her lover's family.

Their common proud feeling was now up in arms against their own happiness. The false point of honour was raised, as the standard under which they were to perish sooner than yield. Loridon persisted in his threat—Yolenta completed hers. Within a week after their utterance, the former was riding in the ranks of the Constable de Richemont, as a gentleman aspirant for chivalric honours; and the latter was led in triumph to the altar by the grim and grizzly lord of Corteryke, more than double the age of her lover, and in every other respect immeasurably his inferior.

The haughty energy which had enabled Yolenta to force herself to this sacrifice was evident in her look and bearing as she moved towards

its consummation. She had the air of a self-immolating victim for a false principle, not of a suffering martyr to a good one. She could not rob herself of her personal beauty, but she had deprived herself of that without which beauty has no charm. The exquisite expression of female grace was not displayed in her resolute glance and proud step, nor in the contemptuous defiance with which she silently hurried towards the fate she volunteered. Her parents and friends, long time the advocates of Humbert von Corteryke, and to whom her sudden resolution had given astonishment as well as pleasure, seemed awed by the desperation of her manner; while the fierce bridegroom himself, amidst all the pomp and pageantry of the ceremony, looked ill at ease, as though he augured nothing good from the accomplishment of his suit. And well might he have his misgivings, if indeed fate, according to the belief of the age, gave warning to its doomed victims, sometimes however too late for their safety.

The procession advanced up the aisle of St. Peter's church in Ghent, the priest stood at the altar steps, the music pealed, and the throng of

spectators gazed with painful admiration on the young bride and her mate, whom a universal murmur pronounced to be an ill-assorted pair. The ceremony went on, and no one, not even the bridegroom, wore a smile of joy. The lookers-on exchanged glances and shrugs of significant meaning. "Such a marriage bodes no good," seemed to be spoken by a hundred tongues; though not a murmur was heard, and it was only the responsive looks of each that appeared to acknowledge that sentiment in his neighbour. The priest's voice ceased, the book was closed,—the nuptial anthem was just going to be pealed from the choristers' gallery, and the organ sent forth a few lively notes, when a loud voice exclaimed close beside the new-married pair, "Let a death-dirge be sung, not an epithalamium!" While those around turned their eyes in the direction of the words, a rapier was plunged deep in the body of Von Corteryke; and as he fell dying to the ground, the white robe of Yolenta was stained, as she herself said to De Roden, "with the bloody stamp of widowhood."

As is usual on the perpetration of such startling crimes, all eyes were turned on the victim,

attracted by the mixed groan and scream of death, the voice of which is a summons wherefrom none may turn aside. Humanity and curiosity are among the strongest principles of man; and when combined on such an appalling occasion as this, no one had a look to turn from the bleeding bridegroom and the stupified figure of her who stood transfixed in speechless horror by his side.

But during the general consternation, some of the observers were for a moment attracted by a human form darting like lightning from the main group across the altar steps and into one of the small vestry doors which flanked it at either side. The figure instantly disappeared—the door closed with a violence which startled the agitated group that raised Von Vorteryke's body, now a breathless corse, from the ground; but no certainty as to him who struck the blow had ever been obtained. The abbot of St. Peter's replied, to all inquiries, that "the sinner had sought sanctuary, and found it." The relatives of the murdered man had no appeal. His widow obtained possession of his castle and domains as her undoubted right; and was installed in

her new honours, under these circumstances so singularly shocking, which appeared to one so inexperienced more like the fulfilment of a marked and extraordinary doom, than a course of those accidental events which chequer the scenes of life.

It was therefore no wonder if the overboiling temperament of our heroine was in constant ferment, in a state so ill adapted to controul it. She was perpetually at war with herself, and very often with those around her; and when intervals of soft and amiable feelings took place, they were usually filled up by some extravagant freak of girlish vivacity. The abbot of St. Peter's was the object of her especial detestation. That he had screened her husband's murderer from justice, was enough to justify it to her own conscience. But independent of that, she felt bound to adopt the bitter hatred of him to whose title and honours she succeeded, against all who bore the name of Van Bart. One exception she no doubt made—but there is no general rule without one. And that which she religiously observed in favour of poor Loridon, was compensated for in the increased proportion of hate

which she bestowed on his father, his uncle, and all the rest of the family.

Conjectures were many as to the perpetrator of the murder. Every body, Yolenta included, was convinced that some one of the Van Bart family had done the deed. General elements of vengeance existed on their side, quite enough to fix it on any individual of the name. But he, who of all others had the greatest motive to urge, if not to justify the crime, escaped suspicion. His absence was known to all; the existence of that motive but to one: and *she* would as soon have accused Heaven's justice or the purity of her patron saint, as have imagined Loridon capable of an act of even trifling dishonour, much less one of coward treachery.

Little more need be said to prove that she loved him with her whole heart. But, in her situation, and with her temper, love was no longer what nature meant it to be; no longer a balm poured on the mind's asperities, but a subtle poison, corroding the proud heart it could not soften.

Nearly a year had passed over. Yolenta had thrown off the first weeds of widowhood. Her

lively spirit required relief under the pressure of her situation, and found it in the indulgence of a love of dress, and in the display of the dignities so strangely acquired and still so uncongenial. Preparations for gay entertainments to her relatives, and expensive additions to her wardrobe, chiefly occupied her now. Every needle and bodkin was put in requisition, every broidery frame was full; and such scenes with her maidens as that in which we introduced her, were the common occurrences of the day, varied by tricks played upon the abbot of St. Peter's and his little-honoured fraternity, such as were passingly alluded to by De Roden in his recapitulation of complaints.

Yolanta slept but little on the night of this last adventure. Her pride was urged to its topmost bent, by the audacity of De Roden; and in her involuntary recurrence to the lover whose rash abandonment had led to such humiliation, she found fresh nourishment for irritation and anger. The dawn of morning found her risen from her uneasy bed, and prepared to meet the threatened visit of the high bailiff in the most determined of imperative moods.

And long ere the sun had travelled his meridian course, Christopher de Roden was seen at the great gate of the castle; and by the voice of a herald, who was habited in the livery of the proud abbot he served, he demanded entrance for himself, the poursuivants, and other functionaries charged with the delivery of a summons to the dame, and various members of the household, "to appear before the feudal baron of Lettelhausen, lord paramount of the territory of Corteryke, to answer various charges of high misdemeanors and misdeeds acted in and upon the body of a lay-brother of the order of Benedictines," and a long array of technical ambiguities and etceteras wound up the herald's speech, the remainder of which we shall leave to any faculty of the mind our readers may please to exercise.

It is very probable that the doughty De Roden hoped for a refusal to this summons; for he surely gave symptoms of surprise mingled with alarm, when the huge wooden gates creaked backwards, the drawbridge was lowered, and a formal invitation to enter pronounced by the sturdy old seneschal, the high bailiff's declared

antagonist on many an occasion of legal and illegal dispute, not only since Yolenta's accession, but long before her bright black eyes had opened on the world.

"Come in, fair gentlemen all, bailiff, notary, and poursuivant," said the seneschal—"valiant Christopher de Roden, learned Lyens van Leenward, honourable Martin Skynet, pass the bridge, and enter the court of Corteryke in peace and for the due fulfilment of your bidding."

"Hark ye, Master Roger Oulternyk," replied De Roden, with a doubtful look—"I hope, and so do these worthy gentlemen, my very good friends and associates in this business, that all is fair meant as well as fair spoken. You see that we come unarmed and unharnessed, in due form of law, with civil herald and the banner of peace; but no trumpet nor feudal men-at-arms, lances or swordsmen, nor the war-standard of our holy abbey, which, albeit, in good cause of quarrel, and against all enemies, I am ready to carry, or to die in good guardianship of the same."

"Let not your valiant limbs quake, nor your

teeth chatter, bold Christopher—all is as it should be."

"That phrase likes me not, master Roger! A twisted yarn makes a straight cord; a polished rind may hide a gnarled knot; rocks lie deep that cause no ripple; and many another wise saw of our good country of Flanders tells me to ask the meaning of that 'all is as it should be?'"

"What a plague! Does the lion-heart of De Roden con the cowardly proverbs of old wives, and his tongue of thunder condescend to utter them?—Come on, come on, gallant Christopher"—

"'Tis not for myself I have any qualms,—'tis for the sake of these peaceable functionaries, d'ye see, for their sake that I, unarmed and unable to protect them, must have my wits about me for want of better weapons."

"Not for us, not for us, most worshipful bailiff," exclaimed the notary of the poursuivant, ashamed of becoming avowed snarers in De Roden's fears; "we are begirt with the armour of civil privilege,—the municipal rights of our noble city of Ghent be our guardianship,—we are not afraid!"

"Afraid! Who's afraid, gentlemen?" exclaimed the bailiff, turning sharp on his comrades, who were used to hear and to quail before his bullying tone, for he was the essential spirit of valour when he had to argue with a civilian. "Who's afraid, I say again? If another word so dishonouring is whispered, I shall immediately retire from this business and leave it in less resolute hands;—and I am very well disposed to do so even now."

The seneschal could not suppress a laugh; and the keen ears of De Roden distinguished a shrill echo to it, as though from a woman's throat, in the porch-way beyond the bridge This operated on him with marvellous effect. It must be a daring coward indeed who can brave the test of female ridicule. The grand bailiff stepped across the bridge in advance of his friends and attendants; but halting yet another moment, he asked the seneschal "if the watch-dogs were all secure, and the working wenches fastened up?"

"Neither dog nor damsel shall be let loose on you, without the orders of the dame," replied the seneschal. The doubtful answer struck a new

chord of alarm in the bailiff's breast. He would have retreated incontinent beyond the bridge, had he not at this moment perceived it to be drawn up. In another, the ponderous gates were fastened behind him, and he saw himself, for the first time, in the court-yard, and in fact, in the custody, of the feudal mistress of Corteryke. Sad misgivings shot through him and made him shudder like the night wind that sweeps the forest and shakes its every branch. But ere he had time to utter another word, or to advance further, the dame herself appeared standing just within the porch of entrance, in front of a formidable array of half a dozen figures drawn up in line, cased in iron, armed cap-à-pie, and looking more awful from their showing no sign of life beyond the tremulous shake of their black plumes, which gave an almost supernatural air to their display.

"To you, most noble dame, Yolenta of Corteryke, in all honour and privilege the seignorial proprietor of this manor, domain, and castle, the right reverend and holy father in God, Gerald, Abbot of St. Peter's, greeting:"—-

So far had De Roden, summoning up all his

courage, proceeded, when the dame cut him short:—"What mumbling mummer art thou," cried she, "who comest hither with whining tone and set discourse, assuming the name and title of that most pious priest, Abbot Gerald, of St. Peter's? Speak, fellow, to thine own name and quality;—I know thee not."

"Not know me, noble and amiable dame? I am Christopher de Roden; in all humility your servant."

"Thou, fellow, that prále of church service, that pattern of high bailiffs!—Impostor that thou art! Did Christopher de Roden ever appear in such a shabby suit of civil garniture?"

"It is required by my present functions, magnanimous dame."

"Could his voice of thunder ever sink to that squeaking tone?—His lion-look change to thy sneaking aspect? Pestiferous wretch, out on thee! Away this moment from my bounds, or by my saint the ban dogs shall tear thee limb from limb!"

"Oh, merciful lady!"

"Speak not a word, foul libeller of the thrice

valiant Christopher — Out on thee, I say! Charge, halberdiers! *Slae doodt! slae doodt!*"

At the utterance of the terrible war-cry, the mail-clad figures, automaton-like, levelled their lances, and advanced without speech, but at a clattering trot, towards the high bailiff. He turned and would have run, had not the solid obstruction of the great gate stopped his way. There he could not stay, inviting, as it were, the hostile lance to pin him to the wood-work; and to stir now, either right or left, was to rush on their points. Down therefore he fell flat on his face, uttering piteous cries for mercy and pardon for all offences past and present against the dame and every person of her household, whom he almost individually named.

Yolenta advanced close, and with a hazel twig, which stretched invitingly to her hand from a tree close by, she laid several well-planted stripes on the sprawling poltroon. The gate in the mean time was wide opened, and the scene amply displayed to his companions beyond the bridge; and when, on repeated commands from the fair executioner, he arose to withdraw, a loud

burst of revelry accompanied the rattling clash of half a dozen suits of mail, which were at once unbuckled and dropped to the ground, by as many of the mirth-making damsels who had been cased therein, and who now pursued their runaway victim (persecuting him the while with gibes and laughter) to the utmost verge of the bridge, where even his grave companions could not refrain from joining in the laugh.

Once beyond the castle's verge, De Roden recovered in some measure from his fright, on beholding from what species of danger he had escaped. But burning shame took place of frozen fear. The vengeance founded on exposed cowardice is deeper than the well in which truth lies hid. The look, the tone, the gesture it now inspired are not to be told, and scarcely to be imagined.

"Dame Corteryke!" exclaimed De Roden, in half smothered accents,—"the soft white hand that struck an officer of Holy Church is forfeit beyond redemption! Ponder well on that truth, and enjoy your triumph!"

There was a terrible tone of reality in these words, that spoke conviction to Yolenta and her

attendants. Their laughing voices were all at once hushed. The broad smile on each face was turned to a sad and solemn expression. Every limb seemed paralysed; and each maiden stood motionless, with eyes turned on their menaced mistress. Yolenta betrayed no visible signs of fear. Had the axe been raised over her wrist, she would have scorned to let a nerve or muscle betray the weakness of alarm. But a chill struck her heart, and her eyes turned involuntarily on old Roger van Outternyk, as if to inquire into the truth of De Roden's threat.

"It is too true, my gracious dame," said the seneschal, as though he replied to a positive question. "The abbey privilege is notorious—the vengeance of the church implacable—the lord of Lettelhausen and his brother the abbot will be too glad, alas! to seize this frightful occasion for your destruction."

"What must be done, good Master Seneschal?" asked the dame.

"You must fly instantly these walls—these wide domains; all will be sequestered to the church ere sunset; the forms in such a case have the wings and the force of the whirlwind.—

If seized on, your fair hand will be surely severed on the block, by a ruffian executioner, and banishment for ever be added to the sentence."

"Indeed! it is a hard sentence—a dear price to pay for a few strokes on the back of a base craven like that. But with the blessing of St. Bavon, good Roger, I shall baffle the blood-suckers."

With these words, uttered in a steady, if not a daring tone, for *that* she could not assume, Yolenta turned into the castle, and lost no time in preparing for her safety.

CHAPTER III.

WITHIN an hour from this untoward adventure, consternation and confusion had established their reign on the ruins of all that had existed of domestic enjoyment in the castle of Corteryke. The tremendous power of the brother tyrants, who, in right of their feudal fiefs and ecclesiastical prerogative, ruled over the territory included in our scene of action, was at this period of Flemish history at a frightful height. No individual suzerain of the lower classes of the nobility could hope to resist it effectively. To do so at all, for however short a period, would have required the skill of a warrior and the desperation of an adventurer, joined to a prodigious influence over the mind of each follower. What then could be hoped from the power of a mere girl, who, though endowed with courage and energy, was deficient in every other requisite of resistance? She readily enough found support from her servitors and dependants in minor attacks on the tyrant abbot's authority, when they

only assailed his fish ponds, his profligate monks, or any other unimportant or worthless portion of his possessions. But when it came to the fact of striking a high bailiff—the supreme instrument of church exaction, there was scarce a heart that did not quake with fear, and scarce a voice that was not ready to cry "sacrilege!" The exceptions were probably to be found among the women. They either did not consider the danger so immediate, or hoped it would fall least heavily on them, or were affected by some other of those light influences of the female mind, which in times of threatened peril give them an air of courage that would be ungraceful and unfeeling in the tug and tumult of conflict. Exertions of female prowess at such times are exceptions to the general rule of nature, which regulates the duties and the charms of women. We cannot withhold our *admiration* from those who mix in such doings, and overstep the limit of feminine duty:—but we view them as though they stood on a pedestal above both their sex and ours; and are seldom anxious to take them down and hug them in our arms.

Yolenta's maidens found a charm even in the

threatened horror of anathema, while it procured them one busy and bustling day of variation to their life's monotony. They played a thousand fantastic tricks of affectation, and prepared for concealment or flight with airs more suited to a masquer's revels than to the serious occasion at hand.

The men, excepting only the seneschal and scullion, escaped as best they could, and scampered away across the wide and wooded plains to the shelter of relatives and friends. But the two extremes just alluded to, to wit, Roger Van Oulternyk and Kobus, met upon this occasion on a common point of duty; stood firmly to their post, and showed no symptoms of flinching from the danger which perilled the mistress they were bound to serve in weal or woe, and the place they had sworn to abide by in honour or in ruin.

Old Roger declared, that having for thirty years and more braved all the dangers that had so often threatened Corteryke Castle, in civil feuds beyond reckoning, he would die sooner than abandon it now, even though the heavy hands of its worst enemies were raised to crush it.

Sir Kobus,—for his title was confirmed beyond reversal,—inflamed with valourous gratitude towards her who had raised him so high on the roll of dignity, vehemently vowed that he would serve her to the last as a true follower, and never quit her side but at her own positive command, or for her special welfare, till death, or some of the abbot's strong-armed feudal men, dragged him away with irresistible force.

Thus the castle was sure of one devoted guardian, and the lady of one determined follower; and each soon entered upon his hazardous and solitary functions.

Among various articles of dress composing the wardrobe which for some time past had occupied Yolenta and her attendants, there were more than one suit of male attire, in which it was very common for women of quality to appear at masquerades and other fanciful entertainments. In one of those suits she was now speedily equipped; and a favourite palfrey, of size suited to her light weight and accustomed to her hand, was quickly caparisoned by the care of Sir Kobus, and ready to receive her on its back. Sir Kobus himself,

hastily accoutred, well armed, and furnished with a large saddle-bag, filled with some necessaries for his mistress, and a smaller leathern sack containing articles of his own, was soon mounted on a strong horse and riding at full speed from the castle bounds after the apparent boy who cantered away before him, gracefully waving one hand in farewell to the solitary seneschal, while the other tightly held the reins of the high-spirited palfrey.

Manifold and curious, no doubt, were the adventures that befel the maiden-widow and her attendant, who, to the sturdy stupidity on small matters common to his class, joined much of that cunning sagacity on important occasions which is so remarkable in half-witted persons. But whatever those adventures might have been, they have found no record in the chronicles which furnish our materials; and we have therefore to bound over a considerable chasm of time, unfilled by any event which might serve as a stepping stone for our passage.

Weeks, most probably of pain and peril, elapsed before Yolenta and her squire reached

the destination she had fixed on from the first moment that she resolved to abandon her castle and all her earthly possessions to the harsh grasp of the law and the church. There is not one female reader who will not have foreseen that destination. But, for the information of the less sensitive sex, we must say it was the French camp, in the heart of Normandy, where, as Yolenta had been previously informed, her never-forgotten lover was at that time serving with great honour and *eclat.*

This was a bold step—a weighty undertaking. But while Yolenta pleased herself by considering it as urged by despair, it was in fact the suggestion of undying hope, mistaken awhile for its drear antithesis. In short our heroine was

" ——in love, and pleased with ruin,"

which came in a shape that justified her having recourse to the measure for which her heart had long been imagining an excuse. She therefore abandoned all her possessions without a regret, and threw herself on the wide world with such buoyant animation as the mariner braves the

ocean's waste withal in search of the home of his young and long-cherished affections.

"Halt, and rein up, young Sir, and you, irreverent fellow! Who and what are ye? Friends of King Charles, or of the English? Answer quickly, or this arrow will whistle through one or both of your bodies."

Such was the address of a French sentry to our heroine and her follower, as they trotted briskly out of the confines of a small wood in Normandy, immediately beyond which lay the rear-guard of the Constable's army, at that period opposed front to front to the English force.

"Good soldier, we are neither enemies of King Charles nor friends of the English," replied Yolenta, reining up her palfrey—"so let us pass towards the French camp, where we have pressing business."

"Ay, with your good favour, master bowman, let us pass; our horses are much blown and we need refreshment," said Sir Kobus, striking his heels inwards and urging on his steed.

"Hold, I say!" cried the sentry. "This

ambiguous answering and suspicious haste please me not. What do ye seek in our camp?"

"A dear friend," answered Yolenta.

"Young gentleman, you must be, methinks, even younger than you look, to seek that article either in camp or court. What is his name?"

"Loridon Van Bart, a Flemish gentleman of name and condition. Where is he to be found?"

"*Vertu Dieu!* That is more than I can tell. We have so many adventurers and *vauriens* of name and condition' with the army, that it would puzzle the provost marshal to find out any given individual among the marauders and pillagers which throng its ranks."

Yolenta's blood rose high, but an instinct of prudence floated on its tide. She suppressed any retort, and merely asked what was to be done.

"Blood of the saints! that I know not as far as your concerns go," replied the soldier; "but as regards my duty, it is that I hold ye both here, hostages for each other, till the relief comes round, and ye may be led prisoners to the picquet guard."

Sir Kobus's freckled face blushed a copper-tinted crimson, and he gave first a look of defiance at the sentry, and then another of fierce meaning at his mistress.

"No, Kobus," said she, interpreting his thoughts, "we must obey the rules of the camp; this honest archer does but his duty in holding us secure."

"Which he will do, depend on it, in spite of flattering speeches or scowling looks from master or man. So dismount ye, and stand back to back under that elm. There—that will do; now let me blindfold ye both with the ends of your own kerchiefs. So—good! Stand quietly now, for the first that shows a movement towards escape shall be instantly transfixed to the tree's trunk with this ell-yard arrow, and his comrade swing presently up to its toughest branch." Yolenta saw that submission was the best policy. Both she and her follower submitted to the irksome operation; and within an hour were released and conducted by the visiting patrol within the lines of the French encampment, with all the precautions usual in such cases. The whispered buzz of voices as she was led along could give

Yolenta no clew to discover what was the conversation of her conductors. But on one occasion she fancied a murmured exclamation of surprise; and a little afterwards some one took her by the hand and pressed it softly, and as she thought reassuringly, in his own. Whatever might have been meant, the effect was comforting, as is the slightest mark of sympathy, whether by look, word, or action, in cases of doubt or peril. Yolenta could not account for the feeling of confidence that seemed conveyed to her by this simple incident, nor did she wish to examine it very profoundly. Young and sanguine minds rarely like to scrutinize whatever seems a token of hope or promises pleasure. If they did, they would be less frequently the victims of self-deception.

When the bandage was removed from Yolenta's eyes, she could scarcely believe the evidence they gave; and Sir Kobus seemed bewildered even more than she. The imperfect notions which they had both formed of a camp, were all belied by the scene now before them. The rude tents, coarse treatment, hard living, and strict discipline which had been always as-

sociated with our heroine's notion of military service in the field, were little in unison with what she now gazed on.

The first object which caught her attention was a splendid canopy, of many coloured silk, surmounted and flanked by banners, pennons, and standards, under which were seated several richly dressed men, at a table covered with such a gorgeous specimen of feasting as was superior to any thing in the circle of Yolenta's previous experience, even in the entertainments of Flemish wealth.

When she turned her looks to the right and left, she was amazed at the prodigal display of luxury and splendour under canopies of dazzling brilliancy, or in elevated balconies: and on stages all round were to be seen bands of musicians, groups of mountebanks, rope-dancers, and jugglers, all playing most fantastic tricks; sorcerers and soothsayers surrounded by ardent listeners; while cooks and badged servitors prepared or carried about the most luscious dainties. A little farther off were paraded a prodigious number of horses in magnificent caparisons; hawks, dogs, and their attendant falconers, hunts-

men, and varlets in rich liveries; and mixing in all the shows and splendour, was a company of most beautiful women, whose extravagant style of dress and bold looks and gestures proclaimed them to be of a class of which Yolenta had heard, but wherewith she had never before come into contact.

The silence which had been studiously observed while the prisoners were brought blindfolded into this scene of enchantment, was suddenly changed to a burst of various noises as soon as the removal of the bandages gave a loose to restraint. The sudden crash of music, the clamour of voices, the bursts of laughter, and the chorus of all other incongruous sounds, aiding the impression of visual wonders, made Yolenta start, stare, and thrill with undefinable awe, as though magic had conjured up the scene; while Kobus seemed as though struck dumb, and crossed himself vehemently, as his eyes rolled wildly and his mouth gaped wide, to the infinite amusement of the bystanders. After a sufficient time had been allowed to give the wonder-stricken strangers a general conception of

what they saw, but not enough to allow any attempt at analysing, much less accounting for, the strange details, a man arose from his seat under the main canopy, which being the place of honour, added to the deference with which he was regarded and listened to, proved him to be the chief in dignity and importance of the motley assemblage. The appearance of this individual rivetted Yolenta's attention. He was tall and harsh featured, and a mixed expression of cunning and ferocity gleamed in his eyes. He was armed *cap-à-pie*, but over his coat of mail he wore a large mantle, such as was common to possessors of the black art, a white beard fell far down on his breast, and he held a wand in his hand such as it beseemed a conjuror to bear. As he waved his hand with an air of authority, immediate silence followed; and then fixing his eyes with a piercing look on Yolenta, he exclaimed, "And who art thou that comest in that impostor's garb into my presence? Speak!"

"If you know my garb to be assumed, you may perhaps be able to divine the rest without my telling," replied Yolenta, in a tone that be-

trayed no fear. She was buoyed up by an undefinable notion that she had a protector at hand.

"Bravely answered! but somewhat bold withal, and more beseeming the sex you assume than your own," said the man sternly.

A blush passed over Yolenta's cheeks, and she trembled to find that her sex was discovered. She attempted no answer.

"Come hither!" exclaimed the mysterious personage; and she obeyed as if by a spell. When she was close beside him he took her by the hand.

"Let me examine this fair palm," said he. "Why, how is this? Here are lines of virgin token, crossed by those of marriage, ay, and of death! What may'st thou be—maiden, or dame? or is it that thou art both?"

A buzz of astonished exclamation from the many wassailers present broke on Yolenta's ears, and completed the confusion caused by the words of the wizard—for so she no longer doubted her questioner to be. She attempted to withdraw her hand; but he held it with a firm grasp, and continued as follows.

"Maiden, wife, and widow!" so say the chiromantic lines—but more is spoken on this tell-tale palm. Sacrilege is written here—and deadly punishment—this hand is forfeit!"

At these words, pronounced in a terrible tone, Yolenta shuddered and felt herself growing pale and faint. She looked round for some protecting glance, some outstretched hand, to give again such pressure as had erewhile thrilled through her with delicious hope. She felt that all was but delusion; and as the fearful man who had so truly read and so strangely spoken her sad history let drop the hand which he denounced, she felt it fall by her side, palsied and numb, like some withered branch struck dead by lightning on its parent stem.

"Bear away the doomed one—let the church recover its victim!" said the mysterious being under whose control Yolenta seemed so magically to have fallen. She was led away, she knew not how, into a tent apart from the canopy where this strange scene had passed before her, more like some pageantry of magic than an action of reality.

In the tent she found a female attendant, and

several suits of dress adapted to her sex, but bearing painful evidence of her own humiliated condition. They were coarse, and of the pattern worn by penitents doomed under ecclesiastical sentences. The woman signified to her that she was immediately to throw off her male attire, and equip herself in one of the more suitable habiliments. Yolenta at first started back, repugnant at the change, for she had become accustomed to the dress she wore, and was revolted by the texture and make of that now destined for her. A moment's reflection however told her to submit; and she had no sooner reassumed the wimple, the kirtle, and the coif, than she experienced a return of those feminine feelings which had been laid awhile in abeyance by her disguise and the manly bearing she had assumed with it.

It was some time before Yolenta could recover her self-command sufficiently to address her attendant in a way likely to gain her good will. At length she inquired into whose hands she had fallen, giving a turn to the question as though she considered herself obliged rather than hurt by the treatment she received.

"In truth, my good mistress," replied the woman, "you may look upon yourself as well treated—so far. Giles, marquess of Laval, seldom deals out any delicacy to those who fall into his hands, but commonly hands them over to the sacrifice without ceremony or delay."

"The marquess of Laval! and is it into the power of that monster that fate has thrown me? Oh, Loridon, Loridon! I am indeed now lost to thee as thou art to me!"

"Hush, hush, fair lady! the mighty one has ears for every whisper, more than mortal man possesses!" said the woman with a stifled tone, in which fear seemed mixed with pity. Yolenta caught the double feeling with the readiness inspired by her own alarm.

"Oh!" said she, "can you not save me? Can you not tell me tidings of the young lord of Lettelhausen?"

"Bless you, mistress! I have not been able to save myself, and I hear tidings of no one beyond the bounds of this prison, for such, alas! is this tent to me."

Yolenta would have renewed her appeal, but before she could speak again, a curtain door of

the tent was drawn aside, opposite to that which had seemed the only entrance, and the awful object of her terror was seen standing beyond in another and larger compartment. While Yolenta's eyes were fixed on him, the female attendant disappeared; and as he motioned with his hand for the advance of our once courageous and daring heroine, her knees tottered and fear almost paralysed every limb.

"Come forward!" exclaimed he, in a voice of irresistible command. She knew not by what impulse of obedience she was in a moment standing close before him.

"Do you know me?" asked he in a tone of thunder.

"Yes," answered she; "the reputation of the marquess of Laval has penetrated even into the marshes of Flanders."

"And what do you know of me?"

"Your undaunted courage, your immense wealth, your princely establishment of men and animals, your hunting train, exceeding even that kept up of yore by Edward of England or Gaston de Foix,—your more than mortal knowledge—your—your——"

"Go on, go on, do not hesitate! Fill up the measure from the withering blast of fame—my cruelties, my sorceries, my demon tricks, is it not so? What then, the walls of Ghent have echoed to the voice of my deeds? But have they heard of all that has driven me to hate mankind, and form a compact with man's arch-enemy? Does your remote world know *why* I call up the fiends and dance the round of demon revelry? Can those who execrate my name dive into the mystery of my nature, and who—like you, weak woman—call me monster, tell the difference between that and man?"

Yolenta could not have answered, even if she had known how to reply to this out-burst. The power of utterance seemed to have forsaken her.

"And what would you here, fair dame?" resumed the Marquess of Laval.

"You are not one who needs to ask questions—my object is no doubt known to you," faintly murmured Yolenta, inspired to the exertion by the hope of hearing tidings of her former lover.

"You seek a friend, forsooth? Whom do you seek?" sternly asked the marquess.

"The son of the lord of Lettelhausen."

"The lord of Lettelhausen *has no son.*" The emphasis of these words struck cold on Yolenta's heart.

"Then Loridon is dead!" faintly murmured she; and she would have sunk to the earth under the shock, had not her arm been powerfully grasped by the terrible being whose words still echoed in her heart.

"The lord of Lettelhausen lives—let that suffice thee," continued he; "he lives to claim and exact the penalty of thy sacrilege. This hand, soft and white and gentle as it feels and looks, is nevertheless doomed to repair its outrage. A blow on the back of the bailiff of a consecrated abbey! Stripes on the sanctified shoulders of an anointed dignitary's deputy! Oh, monstrous, monstrous! but the offending member is doomed—the hand is forfeit to thy liege lord—and his feudal ire, whetted by the holy vengeance of his most reverend brother, calls out for prompt and plenary satisfaction."

Yolenta thought that she perceived in this tirade a tone of bitter irony, a mock heroic violence blending with a smothered laugh. It was

one of those instances of overacted energy which leave one in doubt as to their being meant in joke or earnest. She stood still and gazed for a solution of the doubt.

"Go then," continued Laval, "go to the place from whence you came—back to the scene of your crime and the site of your punishment. You shall be well tended on the way—that I take in charge—and from the mouths of the holy abbot you have outraged, and the mighty lord who claims you in judgment, you shall know your fate. The altar of sacrifice is ready—away! and think yourself a rare instance of good luck, to escape thus harmless from the power of Giles de Laval;—you, who for passion's sake drove a lover to despair, drew a husband to death, and doomed yourself to destruction!"

CHAPTER IV.

The ferocity with which the last words were uttered deprived Yolenta of a wish to prolong the interview which they were so well fitted to conclude. She felt released, as though of a heavy weight, when she found herself alone, but it was like the relief of death to a life-burthened wretch. Despair and desolation seemed now her lot. She looked round for the female who had given her at least looks of pity, and who, herself a sufferer, was likely to sympathize with, if not able to serve her She too had retired, and for a few minutes our heroine stood in solitude of the worst and most agitating description, the very opposite to that delicious kind which the reflective or suffering mind flies to, as the wearied body seeks repose. The torture of Yolenta's silent thoughts became almost intolerable; and she was on the point of rushing out among the libertine population of the camp, whose revelry resounded in her ear, when the curtain was again

raised, and two men cased in steel, with visors down, and bearing no visible cognizance by which their service could be known, entered the tent. They beckoned Yolenta away; and she readily obeyed the summons that removed her from a state of impatient suffering, than which she could imagine nothing worse. They passed along several covered passages, some faintly lighted, some quite obscure, until at length they reached an opening, beyond which the verdant colours of herb and tree told that the limits of the encampment were passed, and that the champaign country was at hand.

Yolenta hurried forward to the open air, and felt the comparative delights of freedom, as it blew freshly on her face. A litter, closely covered, stood ready. She scarcely waited the motion of her conductors to spring into it. They mounted two horses, which stood ready caparisoned close by. The driver was in a moment in his seat. All was, in an instant more, in movement. Yolenta closed her eyes and sank back on the seat, without venturing a conjecture as to where she was going, or wasting a thought in vain efforts to unravel the strange mystery of the

scene through which she had just passed. A confused maze of images danced before her mind. The wizard marquess and marshal of France, for he was both, who had given so weighty a proof of his magical powers in divining at a glance who and what she was, appeared to her overheated fancy in a thousand forms. The pageantry of his court—for so it might be called —sprang up in more than even its fantastic variety,—but mixed with every vision and every recollection was the pale, ghastly figure of Coridon, in a thousand forms of death, while the knell like sounds still rang in her ears—"The Lord of Lettelhausen has no son!"

At times anxiety for the fate of poor Sir Kobus crossed her brain. But this was a light cloud, that left a lighter shadow. The absorbing gloom of her lover's loss overcast every lesser shade.

Yolenta was never a good calculator. She had often impatiently "counted the hours," in the common acceptation of the phrase. But that is done by the irregular pulsation of over-ardent temperaments, not with the steady reckoning adapted to dates and distances. She therefore

had little notion of the space she travelled, or the time occupied by her journey, when on a certain day at nightfall she was told that she had reached her destination, the dungeon-keep of the Abbey of St. Peter's at Ghent. She felt some emotion at the mention of the place, but she betrayed none. Her mind was lowered to the deepest pitch of apathy. She followed her conductor to a gloomy cell; and neither asked a question, nor expressed a wish for aught beyond the wretched accommodations of the place.

Reflection however came on, in her despite. She could not stifle the thoughts which rose buoyant on the flood of memory, deep tinctured as they were with the bitterness of its waters. The images of past days of happiness floated before her, but they were imbued with colours of woe. Events of late occurrence returned with less vagueness than they were clothed in at the moments of their action. Notions of the future rose up, embodied into shapes of fact, all hideous and revolting. Her lost lover, her blasted hope her horrid and ignominious punishment, for what she held it but mockery to call a crime, all mixed together in a confusion of pain and anger; and

she passed one of those nights of misery which none but the sensitive and the impassioned can imagine, much less be ever called on to endure. And while we may suppose her in these heavy hours of suffering, we may slightly sketch what had happened during her absence, in the matter of her offence against the ecclesiastical dignity of her enemy the Abbot of St. Peter's.

Yolenta had friends and relatives—words not by any means synonymous,—but the Chronicles do not specify their names. Whoever they were, they took an active part in her cause, which she herself had seemed so totally to abandon. Aided by the efforts of her venerable and faithful seneschal, they made a prompt appeal to the Council of Flanders against the penal sentence pronounced by the Lord of Lettelhausen which condemned Yolenta to the loss of her right hand, and that of banishment for fifty years, adjudged by the Abbot, as well as the decree of confiscation, which condemned the castle and domain of Corteryke to swell the revenues of St. Peter's abbey. The procurator fiscal instituted a process against the abbot Gerald, for having overstepped his authority by this severe sentence,

and having thereby encroached on the rights and privileges of the Count of Flanders, whose feudal tenant the Dame of Corteryke was—the fiction of law which exists to our day being then in practice, making the sovereign a party aggrieved in offences against the subject.

The Council of Flanders at that time held its sittings at Lisle. The abbot was summoned thither; and on non-appearance had his aforesaid decree reversed, and was moreover mulcted in a fine of 2000 nobles. To give a better colour of justice to this sentence, and to deprive the abbot of all excuse for appeal to a higher authority some of the members of the council betook themselves to the town of Alost, which belonged to the empire, and were thus out of the jurisdiction of the parliament of Paris, which the county of Flanders still at that period acknowledged. There the decree against the abbot was promulgated; but he denied its legality and refused obedience, inasmuch as he denounced it as being made "*in fraudem legis*;" and while the question of justice thus lay in abeyance, (the natural and common consequence of law proceedings in those days of confusion,) the intended victim was,

as we have related, handed over to the custody of her inveterate enemy, by an agency as remote as it was mysterious.

The cause had excited an intense interest throughout the county of Flanders; but at the very moment when this was at the highest pitch, and every one waited with impatience for the decision of a point which compromised the safety of so interesting a personage as the young dame of Corteryke as well as the privilege so important both to clergy and laity, the matter seemed suddenly hushed up—the Lord of Lettelhausen ceased to appear in public—the abbot and his people, as well as the relatives and friends of Yolenta, no longer spoke of what had been lately a subject of their incessant clamour—and the name of the sentenced offender was no more pronounced either by friend or foe.

This was immediately after the period of her falling into the hands of Giles de Laval, and during her journey from his camp in Normandy to the city of Ghent.

But quite unexpectedly, and without any previous announcement to the public, the abbey gates were one day at noon thrown wide open;

a procession of unusual splendour appeared, directing its steps towards the great church of St. Peter; choristers, taper-carriers, shield-bearers, men at arms, and all the imposing mixture of feudal and religious pomp preceding Abbot Gerald himself, who appeared clothed in his magnificent white garments, bearing his abbotal staff in hand, his choral cap on head, and loaded with ornaments of state. He was followed by a train of relatives of the houses of De Melna and Corteryke, with their dependants in various liveries, and more than a usual display of state. At some distance following came a female dressed in white robes, but without any hood of honour on her head, which was covered with a simple veil of penitence, concealing her face from the gaze of the multitude, which poured out from the then thickly populous streets of Ghent. She was preceded a few paces by a servant bearing a silver lavabo or tray, whereon was a lighted wax taper; and another who carried a shield, on which was painted the heraldic cognizances of De Melna and Corteryke, and under them the effigy of a hand as though just severed from the arm. Behind the penitent, but at an interval which

was so filled up by attendants as not unnecessarily to shock her, was the public executioner of the city, carrying a small axe, sufficient for the punishment of an offender far more robust than the fragile being he followed, but not adapted to those dismemberments which he was in the frequent habit of operating, on the persons of the numerous criminals which then abounded in that profligate city and its neighbourhood.

The wondering crowds soon learned that it was the young and lovely dame of Corteryke that was thus led in solemn state to the church, to hear the sentence of her sacrifice pronounced, and the mockery of religious service poured over this act of cruelty. In spite of the bigoted devotion with which the people of Ghent regarded all the observances and privileges of religion in those times of ecclesiastical tyranny, they revolted from the horrid spectacle which was now promised them; and it was only the excitement of curiosity and wonder that kept down the loud expressions of a discontent which was not imperfectly murmured in the throng. But the procession had reached the church. All the main actors had been admitted within the chancel and

some beyond the railing of the great altar, on the steps of which stood the abbot surrounded by his officiating band of monks; while an imposing force of armed servitors kept due order among the breathless crowd that thronged the aisles and avenues beyond, and pressed forward to catch every word of the solemnity which was about to take place. The executioner remained outside the church door, in the court-yard, where it was understood the execution was to take place; and never were looks more sinister cast, or execrations more deep-felt muttered, against this necessary but hateful evil of civilized society, than those now spontaneously breaking from the eyes and voices of the astonished and anxious people, who were unable to obtain an entrance into the body of the church.

While all eyes within were bent towards the altar where the abbot had taken his station, or on the white-robed victim who knelt at its foot, she, uninfluenced in that solemn moment either by fear of what was to happen, or by any sentiment of vain display, unseemly anger, or weak hope, raised her white veil and cast her looks around. She saw on all sides faces

of enemies long time avowed mixed with those of still longer imagined friends. How such a junction could have taken place, she could not by any means understand; but she did not perceive in any the expression of either triumph or compassion. A strange look of undefinable enjoyment seemed to pervade all; but it was in every individual so much the same, that in her hasty glance around she could not trace varieties, nor had she a wish to analyze or account for aught that she perceived. She had passively obeyed the instructions of her gaolers and attendants during the preceding night and on that eventful morn, which was the one immediately following her arrival in Ghent. No murmur had escaped her at the precipitation with which she was hurried to her fate. She was not conscious of one bitter thought against her persecutors. The concentrated power of despair had absorbed all lesser passions; and the only feeling to which she seemed alive, was that associated with the oracular sentence of woe—"The Lord of Lettelhausen has no son!"

Yolenta would not have even noticed any one individual face among those now within her ob-

servation, had not, at the moment that she was about to replace her veil and calmly wait the issue of the awful scene, a buzz arisen beyond the altar railings, and loud shouts been heard from without the church. A piercing sentiment of hope darted instantly through her breast. She felt involuntarily impressed with the belief that the indignant people were about to rescue her from her threatened doom. Her eyes fixed themselves intently on the large grated door of the chancel, which now flew wide open; but instead of that rush of popular deliverers whom she expected to see, she had the anguished mortification to observe the heralds and shield-bearers of the Lord of Lettelhausen, whose liveries were too well known to her, while audible mention of his name ran through the congregation.

Despair now kept her gaze fixed where hope had before directed it; and to complete the pang, she soon discovered the commonly inexpressive face of her former follower Sir Kobus, shining with a beam of what she thought ferocious joy, while his body, decorated with the badges and cognizances of Van Bart, came rolling onwards, with a speed as indecorous to-

wards the holy place, as it seemed infamous on the sad occasion. "Ingratitude and treason are the last sharp stings reserved for me!" murmured Yolenta; "Let me now then die!" and letting fall her veil once more over her face, she was sinking to the floor, when she felt herself caught in a powerful yet gentle grasp—one hand was seized within that, whose pressure she even then could recognize as the same which had thrilled through her when a blindfolded prisoner in the French camp—with the other she instinctively raised her veil again—and with eyes straining in the double excitement of ecstasy and wonder, she gazed on the face and figure of her Loridon, until the united force of feelings which threatened to drive her mad, was subdued, and softened by a dissolving flood of tears.

"Yes, Yolenta, yes!" exclaimed her ardent and deeply-affected lover—"Here I am, to claim the forfeit due to the Lord of Lettelhausen by his too powerful vassal, who proves her might even in the very payment of her penalty. Yes, Yolenta, this hand is mine! mine, by every privilege of law, and by the still holier right of love! Mine, to foster and cherish, and hold in

my throbbing bosom, while the heart's blood runs which its soft touch now stirs into redoubled speed—mine, while this into which it is now locked has nerve to grasp a weapon in its defence—mine, till death severs the sweet bond by which I am now here to be joined to thee for ever!"

So spoke the Lord of Lettelhausen, for such was Loridon become, by the sudden death of his father, even at the very moment that Yolenta fled from her castle under dread of his and his brother's tyranny. It was said that a secret blow from one of the men of Corteryke cut him short in his course of tyranny. On that point, however, the Chronicles are not explicit, but they agree in stating that with his dying breath he confessed to the murder of Baron Van Corteryke by his own hand. How little had he foreseen, in his short-sighted vengeance, that his son, Loridon, would so soon and so amply redeem the wrong to her whom it most shocked but least injured!

Reasons of private and family urgency caused the sudden death of the old lord to be kept secret till Loridon could be apprized of it, and at the

same time made acquainted, by the trusty friends whom he had left to watch and report the conduct of Yolenta, with the circumstance of the assault on Christopher de Roden. A swift messenger soon reached him, and a faithful and prudent agent kept him well-informed of all Yolenta's measures, from the moment she fled from Corteryke till she appeared at the outposts of the camp. We need hardly state that this agent was Sir Kobus, who preserved the secret of his engagement with Loridon with all the phlegm and fidelity of his nation.

Loridon had been for many months serving in that portion of the French army commanded by the celebrated Giles de Laval, whose valour and eccentricities obtained him the double reputation of high courage and deep infamy. His splendid establishment has been already alluded to, though by no means described; and for its details, as well as the accounts of his sorceries and cruelty, we must refer to some of the old French historians. It was the good luck of Loridon to save the life of this remarkable man in battle. His influence over him was in consequence such, that he consented to shelter Yolenta, and see to

her safety, instead of making her his own peculiar prize — the common fate of every young woman of personal attractions who happened to fall into his power.

But he did this on one condition, that he might deal with Yolenta as he liked; and the way he liked was to torment her with his pretended magical power, and to torture her with threats and semblances of a coming punishment, which he never meant her to suffer. For he was the inventor of the sentimental quibble by which Loridon claimed and secured her "forfeit hand." The latter was bound by a solemn oath not to reveal himself to his love, though he was close by her side all through her journey to Ghent, until the moment of the denouement arranged by Laval, and strictly followed to the very letter of his plan. Sir Kobus was sent forward to prepare Abbot Gerald and the friends of Yolenta for the part they were to act—and now, we believe, all necessary explanations are summed up.

These were afforded to Yolenta herself in many an after-moment, when she could find leisure from the making up of that long arrear of love which existed between her and Loridon.

But to lead to the fair exercise of all that was due to both of them on that account, Abbot Gerald proposed an adjournment from the chancel of the church to the little chapel of St. Benedict hard by, to complete a certain private ceremony of partnership, as soon as that of compromise was performed in public in the way arranged for the legal satisfaction of all parties. The curious document that specifies this last-mentioned solemnity is carefully preserved; and we cannot better or more authentically conclude the relation of our legend than by inserting a translation of this instrument, which so slily slurs over the chief cruelty of Yolenta's sentence, and all that might tell the secret circumstances by which the main fact could be explained. It is well, however, that the minute accessories of the principal transactions were within reach, otherwise the memory of Yolenta Van Corteryke would have gone down to a posterity even more remote than is formed by our readers of to-day, as a record of compounded felony, instead of over-punished levity and amply rewarded love.

TRANSLATION.

INSTRUMENT of REPARATION of the noble Lady Yolenta Curtrosinis, called De Melna, for having abused and even struck with a stick, in the discharge of his duty, Christophorus de Roden, bailiff of Lettelhauthem, on the fourth day of April in the year 1396.

In the name of God, Amen. It happened on the day above mentioned, that a cause was to be heard, of and concerning some controversies, complaints, and debates between the religious father in God, Lord Geraldus, by the divine permission abbot of the monastery of S. Peter, at Ghent, of the sacred order of Benedicts, in the diocese of Tournay, in the name of his congregation on the one side, and the noble Lady Yolenta Curtrosinis, called De Melna on the other, from certain causes arisen on the part of that same noble lady, (as is declared both in actual letters, and as in other authentic documents, concealed and openly in

the power of the same lord abbot,) relative to the same complaints, containing the religious father's sentence, decree, or order, (to which the noble lady had submitted, as is proved by letters written on that subject, and placed in the custody of the same lord abbot,) the already-named noble Lady Yolenta being assigned, appeared in person. The noble lady having thought on the enormity of her crimes, and especially, that she had injuriously and spitefully ill-treated a certain Cristophorus de Roden, bailiff of the same lord abbot, and of the aforesaid church in the parish of Lettelhauthem, in the diocese of Cambray, whilst performing his duty as bailiff, and even so far as to strike him with a stick. For which enormous deed, lawfully proved by the feudal men of the same religious father, and of his church, on a certain day being banished by a trial without the dominion of the church of St. Peter aforenamed, for the space of fifty years, publicly, solemnly, and judicially, within the boundaries of the said monastery of St. Peter, and in the virstallium therein existing, to obtain the remission of which banishment, indulgence,

and peace from the same religious father, she appeared personally in the aforesaid monastery of St. Peter, followed both by a decent suite of shield-bearers of a noble race of parents, as well as of footmen. Therefore the same noble lady being present in the aforesaid church of St. Peter, and awaiting the arrival of the same religious father, the religious father in God Geraldus the abbot himself, clothed in his white ecclesiastical garments and other ornaments, and wearing above the choral cap, with the abbotal staff which one of his shield-bearers carried before him, came down, and placed himself within the solemn choir, before the great altar of his church, in which his underlings, in white, sang the sacred office, a great multitude of people of both sexes standing round about. Of which-named religious father the abbot, the same aforesaid noble Lady Yolenta awaiting the arrival, going from the place where she had waited, her relations going before, and the footmen following, in the arms of two noble shield-bearers, only wearing a slight veil on the head without any hood, humbly advanced to the presence of the aforesaid reli-

gious lord father the abbot, and reclining in sign of humility, offered to the same Lord Abbot, in and for amends of the abovementioned deed, a certain silver lavabo, which one of her servants bore before her with a lighted wax candle placed in it, (and on which lavabo were placed and are placed clearly and distinctly, and in large and notable letters on the outside, the title or superscription of her fault and reparation, and the fist and figure of a woman, together with the arms of the said noble lady Yolenta Curtrosinis;) begging him, as a guilty person, that he would be well pleased to pardon her, and to take off from her the banishment pronounced against her, on account of the enormity of the crime perpetrated by her on the person of the said bailiff, and her contempt of the said lord abbot and his church. But there, at the command of the said lord abbot, Joannes de Vracht, bailiff of the feudal men of the said church of St. Peter aforesaid, in the presence of several feudal men of the said church, namely, in the presence of the noble, and powerful, and honourable man Symon de Linteme a soldier, of the son of Peter Symoens, of John de Schaghe, of Symon Parys, of Henry Maech, and William Drieghe, asked

the same noble Lady Yolenta if she had performed the first fruits of the amendment, for and because she had beaten with a stick, and otherwise ill treated Cristophorus de Roden, bailiff of the same religious father, and of his aforesaid church, and although bailiff of the same, and exercising his office, and because he did perform his duty? Which noble lady replied in a loud and audible voice, that she had done the things before appointed for the aforesaid guilt and fault; but pardon being asked by the same, and a confession of the aforesaid guilt being made, the same aforesaid religious father in God, Geraldus, made the lavabo offered to him, with the lighted wax candles, be hung up before the altar, before the noble lady removed from the place of the oblation of the lavabo, and where she had asked pardon; and then he benignantly granted an indulgence to the said noble lady, and remitted the aforesaid banishment; which favour, indulgence, and remission the same Johannes de Vracht intimated to those of the people standing round about from the great altar as before, and called upon the aforesaid feudal men, together with Lord Martinus de Mors, the priest's notary, and required of the same notary an

instrument in the name and at the request of the said church of St. Peter; which aforesaid feudal men and notary again asked of the same noble Lady Yolenta, if it would please her to give her own testimony to the truth of the things done, acted, and confessed by her? who replied with a benevolent look, and of her own accord, Yes. Upon which, as before, the said Johannes de Vracht called upon the testimonies of the aforesaid. But the said noble lady being pacified, and reconciled to the lord abbot and his church, the aforesaid religious father lord abbot, with his servants and feudal men, and Lord Martinus de Mors, and the often-mentioned noble Lady Yolenta, with her shield-bearers and followers, together with the above-named Cristophorus de Roden, entered a certain chapel of St. Benedict, situated in the said church of St. Peter towards the door, a great multitude of people of both sexes standing outside, and looking and earnestly listening through the lattices, posts, and door of the said chapel. And which people being there congregated, the aforesaid Joannes de Vracht repeated with a loud voice the words of the same Lord Abbot, from the

high altar as before; that although the noble Lady Yolenta was truly called to the church of St. Peter, and that she was reconciled to the bailiff for injuries she had done both to him and the church in his person, yet that it was the intention of the lord abbot, that both persons, namely, that the noble Lady Yolenta and Cristophorus de Roden *as Cristophorus* and not *as bailiff*, should be in peace, and should remain in good and firm tranquillity; and that thus they, namely, that noble lady and Cristophorus, should abide by the decree and mandate of the same lord abbot; expressly declaring, that whoever should do the contrary, and thus be the aggressor, should pay a fine of a thousand Parisian livres. In sign of which agreement of peace, the noble Lady Yolenta before Cristophorus, and then Cristophorus himself, and also afterwards he and the noble Lady Yolenta Curtrosinis remaining together, touched a certain white wooden rod which the same Johannes de Vracht had in hand; but for a fuller or farther conviction, the persons also standing about the said noble Lady Yolenta and Cristophorus touched it, at the request of the same religious father,

who reserved to himself the right of pronouncing the above fine on a violation of the peace. Then the same Johannes de Vracht, in the name of the said church of St. Peter, repeated with a loud voice, not once, but often, the testimony given by the said feudal men and Lord Martinus as public notary; to which requisition and repetition the said feudal men and notary, with the consent of the said noble Lady Yolenta and Cristophorus replied in terms of acquiescence, and upon all and each of them on the same day below written, which was the third holiday of Easter, and indeed upon all things agitated, performed, done, offered, begged, granted, pacified, and otherwise in any manner completed, promised to give testimony to the truth, by placing in the proper time and place the accustomed sign, subscription, and seal, on the letters or papers then produced. But upon all these things written by me, public notary below signed, a public instrument has been requested for the testimony of the persons present. Done in the places and hour appointed, in the 1496th year from the birth of our Saviour, on the fourth day of April. For the perpetual right between the

two, Bonifacius, called the ninth, as successor of Urban, called the sixth whilst he lived, and Benedict, called the thirteenth, as successor of Clement, called the seventh whilst he lived. *Oh grief! a schism existing in the holy Church of God!* The honourable men who were present at this are, John Capentator, licentiate in arts, from Paris, and Leyns van Leenswarde, senior, the witnesses of the Tournay and Utrecht dioceses being specially summoned.

And I, Johannes Bargh, of the diocese of Tournay, sworn public notary by the apostolical and imperial authority, and by that of the episcopal senate of Tournay, have been specially present at the said oblation of the lavabo, at the asking of pardon, at the granting of grace, and at the remission of the banishment, together with the repetition of Johannes de Vracht, and at the researches made by the feudal men, and by the said Lord Martinus respecting the aforesaid noble lady, and the answers of the same noble lady, and in the aforesaid chapel at the reformation of peace, and all other and each thing above written, with the said witnesses; and when I saw and heard that these

things were thus done, I at length completed the present public instrument, written with another hand, myself being occupied with other things, and I have signed with my accustomed sign, and subscribed myself to the same, being called to the testimony of all the aforesaid.

THE

ORPHAN OF CAMBRAY.

A

LEGEND OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

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CHAPTER I.

In the year of grace 1305, and about the month of March, and during the episcopal reign of his reverence John de Bethune, of Hainault, the king of the guild or confraternity of the mulquiniers, gave up the ghost, in the ancient city of Cambray.

After long intrigues and longer speeches, for the worthy cambric-weavers and thread-makers of those days were almost as prone to quarrelling and prating as the burghers of the present time, the election of a successor to the defunct chief of the corporation, fell upon Master Eustace Dinault, a safe and jovial companion, and a discreet member of the town council.

One may guess, without being told, what scenes of festivity and feasting, what indigestions and head-aches abounded for fourteen days.

In the first place, the king of the mulquiniers, in honour of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, (the common custom,) fed for three days running, and three times each day, all the members of the guild, to say nothing of their relatives, friends, and acquaintances, who were all entitled to be thus treated, by the statutes of the town and immemorial usage.

On the other hand, the richest members of the guild took their turns to entertain, in their private mansions, and in due course of custom. Glorious days of hospitality! when feasts and festivals were, what they ought to be, the types of good fellowship and the links of social life instead of formal ceremonies, exchanged in stiff observance of conventional habits, an obligation to those who partake of and an annoyance to those who give them.

Small chance is there now of calculating how many golden crowns were spent, or what quantity of victuals were consumed, any more than the number of wine-flasks which, according to the

facetious saying of King Eustace, "yielded up their spirit" on this occasion.

Far better at once to say, that the mulquiniers sat down, on their wooden stools, to table soon after noontide mass each day, and that they never stirred till night-fall, and only when the warning sound of the curfew-bell made them start from their revelry, with a general exclamation of "already!"

It was at the same hour, and a few days after Easter-day, that one of the most highly considered members of the corporation, Master Bartholomew le Baudain, had wished a cordial good night and pleasant dreams to the numerous guests who serpentined from his mansion towards their various homes.

There only remained with him in the great eating-hall two persons, and those of very different descriptions. One was the reverend canon of the cathedral, Father Nicholas Watermetz; the second a man dressed in a many-coloured pourpoint, covered with little brass bells, which tingled at every movement of the wearer. He, at a signal from Master Bartholomew, hurried out to prepare the varlets of the canon, and they

in their turn prepared his reverence's mule—but this they did not accomplish with equal speed; for they had so often clinked their cannikens in honour of the king of the guild, that their fingers found it no easy task to buckle the straps, and tie the various knots of the animal's caparison.

Seeing this state of things, Le Baudain ordered the bell-covered attendant, who, by name Jacob Parigault, was the *sot-souris* or fool of the corporation, to walk steadily before his reverence's mule to the bishop's palace, where he lodged, torch in hand, and with a keen eye around him; necessary precautions in passing through the quarter called Hell's Gap, which lay about half way on the road.

The place distinguished by this uncourteous title still exists in the town of Cambray; but in the days we write of, it was very different from what it is now. But even now it is hideous. Narrow lanes, miserable huts, a poisonous atmosphere, a lazy and filthy stream, and a wretched population form its main features. In this vile place, one never sees the broad day-light; a modest woman hurries through it, her eyes cast

down, and does not breathe freely till she is beyond its precincts? And well she may put forth her speed! For nothing is seen at the doors or windows of the huts but infamous young females, or, crouching on the steps or sitting against the walls, odious old ones, bandying base jests or coarse abuse with drunken and ragged men. At times, the sounds of cracked and screaming clarionets and fiddles are heard, playing a fit accompaniment of miserable music to degraded nature.

At night the aspect of the place is certainly not improved. At all hours there arise cries of pain, the sound of blows, the oaths of the depraved. Attracted by the tumult, the patrol arrives. The lights are instantly extinguished; the noises cease. The unnatural calm is only broken by the measured tread of the guard. But no sooner is the regular tramp lost to the keen ears of the listeners, than a new murmur begins; new uproars break out; and the peaceable and honest citizen, who has ventured into the deceitful repose, hastens his steps towards his own respectable and quiet neighbourhood.

This is not a pleasant picture. But five hun-

dred years ago the place presented one still worse.

There were then no signs of civilization, even in its lowest aspect. There were neither streets nor houses. Nothing, in fact, but a wide marsh, traversed by an ill-made and worse-kept causeway, which passed through a large mass of crumbling ruins. No Christian ever put foot within them, unless in company with some priest, who could set at rest the evil spirits by which they were notoriously haunted.

The place was approached by a sort of outwork, called the "Hole of the Damned." It was the corner of the town in which were the "Jews' street," "Cut-throat Cross," and "Rogues' Alley," the haunt of miscreants of the lowest degree of villany. The house of the hangman and the town-gallows stood prominent here, as a perpetual remembrancer for the edification of the inhabitants.

During the early part of his homeward ride, the Canon Bartholomew, who seemed to enjoy the freshness of the night-air, after the heating debauch from which he had risen, entered with much glee into the spirit of the jester's practical

jokes, and laughed heartily at the strokes of his rough satire, dealt about on the varlets of the churchman entirely for their master's amusement. He imitated their somewhat staggering gait, and the stuttering utterance which was the natural consequence of their excess. He quizzed them without mercy; and when they strove to reach him with the end of their quarter-staffs or the thongs of the whips they carried for the service of the canon's mule, Jacob Parigault twisted and turned from them, or upon them, with attitudes as grotesque as theirs were awkward, and in a way very often to leave them sprawling in the dirty streets. But as the party approached Cut-throat Cross, a more serious air was mingled with the fooleries of the *sot-souris*.

"Brother," said he, taking by the arms a fat and fuddled varlet, who could by no means walk straight, so often had he put hand to head during the evening, "my worthy friend, you would do well to cross yourself, as well as your legs, in this unholy spot. Sign, sign quickly, Martin, for God preserve us! the devil himself comes here at night, and his comrades are the dead felons whom he slips down from the gibbets, and

the Jews—miscreants, whose very mention makes my hair stand on end!"

The canon laughed less faintly than before, and his man Martin began in good earnest to cross himself as the fool went on.

"Saint Nicholas save us! what was that? What a tall black figure! Ah, it is gone—easy enough for it! for mayhap it was some pale thin ghost, or worse still, some demon of hell."

"Hush, hush, good jester," said Father Nicholas, "there should be bounds to wit, even were it broader than thine. These jokes are now out of season and place; we are entering on Hell's Gap, and I must not be disturbed while I repeat the exorcism against all evil spirits, so go on quietly and silently—and hark ye, Martin and Gobart, hold well the bridle, and keep yourselves steady on your limbs!"

"Reverend Father, the road is long and difficult," said one of the varlets; "would not your reverence help to cheer us as we go with the story of this accursed place; it will be all over by the time we reach the ruins, and it is there, if your reverence remembers, that you always begin the exorcism."

"Aye do, your reverence," said the fool; "so that if the devil comes while you are telling the story, and carries away fat Martin, we shall be only one the less, you know."

"Hold thy graceless tongue, Jacob Parigault," retorted the other; "dost not see his reverence is crossing himself before he begins to tell us the story."

"Very well, my children, so be it," said the canon, hemming and hawing, and raising himself up in his saddle, with all the consequential air of a story-teller—the men knew his rage for recounting marvellous events when they asked him to begin the oft-told tale with which they were all familiar. "Know ye, then, that those ruins through which we are by and by to pass, safely I trust, by the blessing of the holy Virgin, the blessed patroness of the town of Cambray, are those of a strong and massive castle, inhabited many and many a day ago by a baron named Truandre, who was sold to the devil by his own mother, even while he was an infant in the cradle.

"The traditions of the country tell us, that this miscreant adored the father of evil, and that he committed the most horrid crimes out of love

to his false divinity. Maidens were carried off, and treated in a way unbeseeming the telling by a man of my cloth. Children were murdered that their fat might be made into diabolical unguents; and pilgrims, who sought shelter in the castle, were forced to deny the holy name of God, or die of hunger in desolate dungeons—but perhaps, my children, you have heard all this before?"

"Oh no, no, good father," exclaimed the varlets—their common reply to this common question of the story-telling canon.

"Or if they have, they forget it, your reverence," said the *sot-souris.*

"Well then; it was particularly against priests, and above all of them against the bishop of Cambray, that Truandre was most violent. He treacherously caught many a pious servant of Heaven, and when they refused to betray the place of safety of the church treasures, he used to scourge them till they dropped dead under the lash, or stretched them on burning coals and consumed them by a slow fire."

"The holy fathers of the church!" cried the varlets.

"How the fat monks must have burned!" muttered the fool.

"Ay, even so, my children," resumed the canon. "But Heaven at last took pity on the afflicted province; and it came to pass that one day during a violent storm, sent from heaven expressly, no doubt, Truandre and all his creatures were struck dead, and his castle burned to the ground. A couple of servants alone were saved, not honest fellows like you, Martin and Gobert, but base polluted wretches worthy of their master.

"Well; these two rapscallions went to the good bishop, and had the impudence to ask *him*, a Christian priest, to forgive them their sins and pardon their defunct lord, and bury him in holy ground, as became one of his noble lineage. But the bishop, having first, as a duty to the church, asked them what they had saved of Truandre's wealth, and found it was all consumed, piously turned them out of doors, cursed them and their latest posterity, as in duty bound, and caused the body of Truandre to be flung into the castle-moat, close beside a gallows

erected to mark the spot. Besides which, he declared excommunicate and relapsed from the holy church whoever touched the accursed carcass, except to spit in its face or otherwise degrade it."

"Served him right!" exclaimed the varlets.

"'Twas treatment too good for him," said the fool.

"Ay, but it was of little need," continued the canon, "for no sooner was the body thrown into the ditch, than the earth all around took fire and threw out flames so fierce and unquenchable that the rains of four successive years could not put them out. A thousand little devils—so says the tradition—were constantly at work pouring oil on the fires of this earthly hell, the approach to which was guarded by a huge green dragon.

"Night and day were heard the cries of Truandre and his guilty crew. Their spirits were seen attempting to fly from this place of torment, while fiends armed with pitchforks shoved them back into the flames. Songs, such as the mouth of man may not repeat, nor his fancy conceive, bursts of atrocious laughter, mixed with

the cries of the damned ones. Sometimes even the demons seized on them with their burning hands and forced them to join in their aërial dances—and when tired of the sport they used to let them drop again into the boiling pit!"

"Warm work, your reverence!" said the fool; but the varlets had nothing to remark at this pause in the story, for they were now close on the much dreaded spot, and their hearts began to sink, and their tongues refused to utter the faintest sound.

"Thus matters had gone on till this blessed hour," once more resumed the canon, "had not the tender-hearted bishop taken compassion on the suffering souls of Truandre and his fellow victims—besides being very anxious to redeem the place and make it church property. So he sprinkled some holy water on the flames, which suddenly disappeared, after having so long vomited forth all that hell held most hideous—and the marshes around recovered their dingy verdure, and their stagnant and discoloured pools. All that was worth reclaiming was adjudged by due appropriation to become part of the abbey lands; but the name of Hell's Gap has stuck to

the place, and in God's truth it may be considered to merit——"

"Help, help! mercy, mercy! The Virgin save us! Avaunt Satan! Martin! Gobert! Holy father make haste, begin the exorcism, begin, begin!" and other most voluble exclamations burst out this moment from the fool, who lay prostrate on the road, his torch extinguished, and the affrighted company consequently left in total darkness.

To describe a scene so gloomy and involved is what no chronicler would have the hardihood to attempt.

Jacob Parigault had fallen over some substance of greater bulk than a passing stone, as the varlets could barely distinguish without being able to judge of its exact magnitude or nature. The canon's mule made a sudden stop, and had infallibly jerked Father Nicholas right over his head into the road, had not the good man seized a fast hold of the animal's ears, balancing himself the while on his neck, while the frightened varlets each held one of his reverence's legs, convinced that their only chance of safety was in sticking to his skirts, and at the same time keep-

ing him in a position that would allow of his freely repeating the exorcism commanded by the church in such cases.

"What ailest thee, thou jesting ass?" replied the canon to the fool's exclamation. "Is this a place for thy fooleries? Thou hast nearly caused me to keep thy profane company closer than I covet."

"Holy father take pity on me! I am in the gripe of the devil!" cried the fool.

"Hold thy impious tongue, fellow, nor provoke Heaven's wrath! On, varlets on! Let this malapert jester follow as he may," said Watermetz in an unwonted tone of anger.

"Holy saints! He tears me with his claws! He bites me with his teeth! Do you not hear his infernal voice? Cruel Father Nicholas!"

The piteous tone with which this was uttered, and the undoubted sounds of a most unchristian voice, fiercely chattering in the direction where the body of the fool was lying, convinced the canon and his followers that it was no joke. One of the men by repeated puffings, restored the light of the torch, from a spark which was not quite extinct, and its lurid gleams

falling upon the road shewed a very appalling scene.

Jacob Parigault had doubled himself up, his face and knees resting on the earth, afraid to look round or to attempt to rise, while a huge monkey fastened on his back was scratching and biting him unmercifully. Close beside lay the object over which the fool had stumbled. It was the dead and bleeding body of a woman.

Father Nicholas and his followers, almost petrified with fear, attempted to push forward, the canon calling loudly to Martin to flog the mule with all his might, while Gobert drove away the monkey and released the fool.

"On, on, good varlets! On from this unholy place, and give notice to the provost of this cruel murder—forward, forward kind fool! Pick thy steps, fellow; there may be more of this loose company ere we get clear of Hell's Gap!"

"Loose company, indeed!" muttered the fool, wiping the mud from his bleeding face with one hand, and waving the torch with the other, while the varlets whipped on the mule, throwing fearful glances around them the while, and Father Nicholas, now settled in his saddle, began in

good earnest to repeat, in an agitated tone, the regular form of exorcism against the evil one. But all were again interrupted by the plaintive cries of a child, and in a moment more the helpless little object was discovered lying at some short distance from the body of the murdered woman.

Moved with compassion at this sight, the worthy canon forgot for a moment his alarm, and wrapping the little innocent carefully in his mantle, he carried it home with him; and his next step was to waken his elderly maiden sister, Madame Bertha, who had lived with and kept house for him for three-and-twenty years.

After a good deal of grumbling, according to her custom when she was at all put out of her way; after snappishly asking her brother, "What should she know about children?" after having rapidly run over the list of annoyances, fatigues, watchings, and torments with which such a charge would overpower her, the good lady began to take as much care of the little stranger, and with as much tenderness, as the fondest mother could have afforded.

"Well, it *is* a lovely little girl!" said she to

Mademoiselle Cunégonde, her waiting-maid and confidant during a quarter of a century. "Her skin is as white as the marble columns in St. Michael's chapel! Run, run quickly and bring some milk; and warm it, do ye see, in the silver pipkin—she is half dead with cold and hunger. How slow you are, Cunégonde! You might have made it in less time! Sweet Saviour be praised for having spared the poor little innocent!—Ah, there you come! Thank God! Now, now! See how the dear little thing devours the food!—There, there, let her sleep! I will keep her here in my own bed, that her sweet little voice may waken me with its first sounds."

But the little girl never awoke during the night, and when Father Nicholas came to his sister's chamber-door next morning after nones, to inquire about the foundling and her new nurse, he learned from Mademoiselle Cunégonde that they were both still fast asleep by each other's side. When he repeated his visit, an hour later, he found Madame Bertha fondling on her knees her new acquaintance, whom she had neatly dressed in clean and simple clothes.

After having patiently listened to his sister's long dissertation on the theory of bringing up children, and on her own peculiar superiority as an authority on the subject, Father Nicholas in his turn held forth at some length on the result of the inquiry instituted by the town provost into the circumstances of the last night's adventure.

Judging from her complexion and the fashion of her vestments, the murdered woman was a Bohemian, or gipsy, who was known for some days in the town as gaining her livelihood by shewing a monkey, and making it cut capers for the curious and generous citizens. Some of the vagabonds of the accursed suburb where she sought her lodgings, had seen her imprudently display a scantily filled purse. No further temptation was required to make them put her to death. The lacerated state of her ears, from which the massive gold ornaments had been torn or cut, left no doubt as to the motives of the crime—the criminals were never discovered.

"No matter what she was—no matter, brother Watllrmetz," interrupted Madame Bertha, "we at least will not abandon this poor little object. In the first place we must have her christened—

which her miscreant mother never thought of, no doubt. Nor have you, brother, I am sure. You are nevertheless a priest, and more than that, a canon!"

Watermetz quietly observed, but did not quail under his sister's triumphant look.

"Yes, sister," said he at length—"Yes, you will hold her at the font, and I have found a godfather."

"No—no," said Madame Bertha impatiently, "I have chosen the Provost of St. Mary's, and I positively will have no other. In your eye, no doubt, the commonest mechanic in Cambray had been a fit gossip for me!"

"I am then to inform his lordship the bishop that you refuse him for one?" replied the canon with a smile of good-natured importance, mingled with an expression of drollery.

"His lordship the bishop! The bishop, brother! *He* deigns to fill this office? *He!* How did it happen? How did you bring yourself to ask him? Oh, the worthy, the condescending prelate!"

Madame Bertha strove to accompany this speech with a smile of pleasure; but so little

were her starched and formal features used to such an expression, that all she could accomplish on the present occasion was at best but an equivocal grin.

Some days afterwards the christening took place in the episcopal church, with a parade and pomp that made Madame Bertha's somewhat twisted figure look at least two inches taller. The child was named Lydoric.

The bishop gave a grand christening dinner. The worthy Canon Watermetz, being a great lover of good living, had a habit of paying a visit at times to the kitchen. As he approached it on the present occasion, to make some inquiries about the anticipated repast, he heard a child crying bitterly, while the rough voice of Master Magalouffe, the bishop's head cook, was scolding severely the little culprit.

The canon patronized the cook. and as the latter was pleased to say, honoured him with his familiar friendship. He was now however much shocked to find Master Magalouffe unmercifully flogging his son, who was between five and six years of age, with a half-roasted peacock which

he wielded by one of the drumsticks, and thus made a very formidable scourge.

"Holloa! Hold! How is this, Magalouffe?" asked the canon, throwing himself between the executioner and the victim. "What causes this intemperate anger against the gentle Severin?"

"Reverend sir," replied the cook, "If I did not give vent to my rage I should burst into tears of despair! By Saint Martha, my holy patroness! I never knew suffering like this. For the first time I have disgraced the noble profession of cook!—Have I not cause, Father Nicholas? Look at this peacock! Was ever so fine, so fat, so beautiful a bird spoiled on the spit?"

"Patience, patience, Magalouffe!"

"No—I renounce patience and philosophy in a case like this! Ever since vespers yester-eve my whole establishment has been preparing for this day's dinner—clerks of the kitchen, grooms of the porringer, turnspits and scullions, all! Never was framed a plan more perfect or dignified than mine! Look here, worthy canon—just for one instance—for, Heaven be praised! I am no boaster, or I might give you a dozen

—look at these fried slices of venison—or this roasted sucking pig—or this sauce of sweet herbs with Tourraine plums and Greek raisins; or just taste this gilded soup! Most assuredly it is not from vanity I say it, but the world holds only two cooks capable of manufacturing a soup like this—and if it be true that Taillavant, head of the royal kitchen of France, can make it, as undoubted is it that it was I, Jaques Magalouffe, that *invented* it, when I served under that celebrated artist."

"Nay, but Magalouffe!"—

"Nay, nay, reverend father, but hear me—what hands but Taillavant's or mine could properly cut these slices of *pain-primos*, let them imbibe their due time in their bed, so to call it, of honey, white wine, and yolks of eggs—after which fry them to a turn in marrow and lard—due proportions, mind ye!—toss them on the frothing surge without ever letting them touch the bottom—and finally saturate them in a sauce of rose-water, drudged with saffron, sweet spices, and impalpable gold dust?"

This long harangue, broken even as it was by the canon's interruption, somewhat cooled

the ire of the cook; but it exploded anew at the sight of the fresh peacock brought to him to replace that which little Severin had so carelessly singed.

"A feast like this—like what this should have been," resumed Magalouffe, trembling once more with passion, and raising his voice to its highest pitch, "what it *would* have been but for the villany of this young conspirator, had immortalized me! And now, I merit nought but opprobrium and disgrace! What now can I do, but fling aside my white rod of office as episcopal cook, and hide my dishonoured head behind the meanest burgher's kitchen-wench, who puts on a Sunday her bit of beef or her smoked goose into an earthen pot, with a couple of onions and a handful of pepper and salt! Heaven give me patience!"

"Magalouffe, Magalouffe, I call on you as a cook and a Christian to listen to reason!" exclaimed Father Nicholas, beginning to lose his own temper, while striving to moderate that of another.

"Reason, Father Nicholas! Is it reasonable to see that degenerate brat of mine studying

some scribbled parchment instead of basting my precious peacock? Cursed be the officious chaplain's clerk who taught him such pernicious knowledge!"

"What, then, thou canst read, Severin?" asked the canon of the weeping boy.

"Alas! Yes, holy father," replied he, timidly quitting the niche where he had retreated.

"Read!" cried Magalouffe. "Read! and what will that make of him, let me ask?"

"A canon of the blessed cathedral—the chaplain's clerk told me so," said Severin, emboldened by the encouraging looks of Father Nicholas.

"Canon, canon! Insolent young varlet! Can your reverence forgive him?"

"Be quiet, Magalouffe. Forgive poor little Severin—come, come, for my sake!" said Watermetz. "Since your son shews such a wish for learning, I will myself take him in charge, and we'll make him, if not exactly a canon, at any rate a chaplain, with a good benefice."

"And is it come to this!" exclaimed Magalouffe in a tone of grief, and at the same time replacing his white cap on his pate—"A stran-

ger, and not my son, is to receive from my dying hands the white wand of head episcopal cook !"—and with tearful eyes and woeful countenance, he began to trim, pluck, and skewer up another peacock.

From the day following, and for fourteen successive years, Father Nicholas kept his word; and Severin became and continued his intelligent and industrious pupil.

CHAPTER II.

AND now we must imagine ourselves in the episcopal reign of Monseigneur Godefry de Fontaine, in the year 1320.

Severin had become by this time a fine-looking, a gentle, and most pains-taking young man. The good canon Watermetz, who remembered well what a wild young fellow he himself had been at eighteen years of age, wondered at, while he admired, his pupil, studying the not very attractive science of theology with such extreme ardour and untiring perseverance. The fervent piety of Severin, and his holy ambition of entering into orders, smoothed every difficulty in the way. His only recreation was to devote three or four hours of each day in copying missals and rare manuscripts and in colouring the fantastic ornaments of those illuminated writings. In this species of employment he had acquired an extraordinary degree of perfection, which the most celebrated rubricators might have envied. Father

Nicholas was indebted to the exertions of Severin's talent for a library of fourteen thick volumes, a literary treasure of no small value at the epoch of which we write.

During the fourteen years which we have just jumped over with such a bound, Madame Bertha had ceased to reside with her brother, having gone to live with, and give the full benefit of her acidulated kindnesses to a female relation near Mons, who was infirm and old, and who had declared that whichever of her cousins, no matter in what degree, would nurse her during life, should have all her property at her death.

Madame Bertha had taken Lydorie with her to her new abode. They seldom came to Cambray, although her affection for her brother, as strong as it was sour, had not in the slightest degree changed its quality. When the worthy canon lost the society of his sister as a constant resident, he persuaded (easily enough) Severin's father to allow him to take the boy wholly to his own care, and he accordingly brought him home as one of his family.

As soon as—and Dame Bertha did not think it soon at all—the old relative was dead and buried,

the brother and sister were once more united under the same roof. Severin was just then waiting the sacred permission to enter on the first grade of his intended holy calling; and he sighed for it with the impatience with which one longs for the chief object of their earthly wishes.

Madame Bertha's pupil—thanks to the mixture of contradiction and kindness, both in their turns exaggerated, of the good old lady—was far from possessing the tranquillity of taste and equability of temper which distinguished Severin. By turns frolicsome and docile, silent, animated, gentle, and impetuous, she was sure to please every taste at times, and therefore to be a general favourite. The good canon was foolishly fond of her. Madame Bertha scolded her twenty times between matin and vespers, and kissed her at least as often. The whole family yielded to all her varieties of temper. The canon, his sister, the maidens and the varlets—and Severin like the rest.

Lydorie was always to be seen as was becoming a young person of the first respectability. Never was any pretty girl, with fine blue beam-

ing eyes, more gracefully dressed than she, as she went in the morning to mass, or walked in the afternoon under the double row of chestnut trees which shaded the principal promenade of the town of Cambray.

One day it so happened, that being particularly struck with a beautifully illuminated missal which Severin was employed in copying, she took the sudden fancy of becoming herself a learner of the art of rubrication: and quickly as the notion was conceived, she insisted on Severin beginning to give her lessons, in laying on the colours, and intermixing the stripes and spots of gold foil on the snow-white vellum pages.

During the lessons which followed in daily succession, it became necessary that Severin should guide, with his accustomed fingers, the fingers—not over docile at all times—of the now blooming and beautiful Lydoric. Gay and mischief-loving as she was at times, she used often to strive to provoke into peevishness her steady and studious instructor, by splashing with large stains of black or blue the fair white margin of the ornamented page. But failing in every attempt to ruffle the temper of, or draw a reproach

from, Severin, she did not fail, after a while, to remark, that either his disposition must be the very best in the world, or her influence upon it the most unbounded. Neither of these notions was a bad recommendation for Severin. Together they made his claim on Lydoric's regard irresistible.

When the daily lesson was over, and Severin once again alone in his chamber, he invariably set himself to prayer. But the instinct of devotion, so lately all in all with him, was now quite overpowered by another, as natural but much stronger. We need scarcely say what it was. It is enough, that in every prayer put up for himself, the name of Lydorie insensibly found a place; and all his lessons of theology were utterly forgotten, in the memory of those in which he acted as teacher instead of learner.

The first effect of the discovery of his true state of mind was dreadful regret. He thought he had committed a budget of mortal sins. He vowed to risk no repetition of his error. Lydorie implored him not to abandon her to her but half-enlightened ignorance. He struggled, excused himself, refused her—but could not resist for

ever! In short, her empire over him was completely confirmed.

Thenceforward his thoughts took a totally new direction. The life of a priest began to appear severe, isolated, and unnatural; and when he chanced to see some young burgher taking a nuptial ramble with his younger wife, while perhaps a little urchin trotted beside or gamboled before them, Severin's heart seemed full, a vague melancholy weighed him down, and a wild longing for he knew not exactly what. But whatever was the change towards which nature seemed to urge him, he was at any rate quite convinced that it was not to be found in solitude. He at times thought that he and Lydorie might perhaps discover it together.

And Lydorie, on her part, began to find her lessons of rubrication very much too short; while from a gay and giddy girl she became all at once transformed into a steady, serious, and somewhat pensive young woman. Sitting by the side of her instructor, she listened with a pleased and patient ear to all he taught. She no longer blotted the vellum, nor mixed the colours for mischief's sake; and when Severin read out to

her some interesting story of sacred history, her eyes used at times to fill with tears, and her bosom to heave with sighs, particularly at the page of Holy Writ which records the loves of Jacob and Rachel. Now, whether by accident or, perhaps, by instinct, which we have found guiding Severin before, it happened that almost every day he opened his bible at that same place —and always found, as well he might, something new to admire and descant on in that beautiful and touching passage.'

And now the festival of the Holy Trinity had come round; and the epoch fixed for Severin's reception in the earliest order of priesthood was not far off—it was for the day of the Nativity.

The unfortunate student wept tears of sorrow, not unmixed with remorse, at the anticipation of this day, long so ardently looked forward to.

In the fourteenth century, the festival of the Trinity was celebrated by a procession of prodigious pomp, all through the district called the Cambresis, but particularly in the chief town. All the guilds of the corporation bore a part in this ceremony; trumpets blowing, colours flying,

and each burgher dressed in the gaudy pourpoint, cloak, plume, and covered cap distinctive of his trade or calling.

After the ceremony, the various guilds carried in great state to the houses of their several chiefs the finely decorated effigy of the blessed patron whom they respectively invoked; that is to say, St. Pelagie for the weavers and mercers; St. Fabien for the cross-bow makers; St. Sebastian for the archers' company; St. Maur for the bakers'; and Our Lady of Mount Carmel for the mulquiniers.

On Trinity Monday, in the aforementioned year 1320, after the procession had gone the whole course of the town of Cambray, the right reverend Bishop Godefroy returned into the episcopal palace, somewhat fatigued, but still not forgetting to give his parting benediction to the guilds at the foot of the drawbridge. Then rose upon all sides a loud noise of trumpets and viols; and shouts were raised from thousands of voices in honour of St. Maur, St. Pelagie, St. Fabien, and the rest.

Above all these vociferations, however, arose that of the mulquiniers. "Our Lady! Our

Lady !" was heard dominant in the clamour, for Cambray did not boast of a guild so rich or so numerous as that, inasmuch as the dressing of fine threads was a trade of great profit, and required an immense number of hands to fitly prepare the material before it passed into those of the weavers. And of all the noisy throats that shouted honour and praise to their blessed patroness that day, there was not one that was outnoised by the voice of our old acquaintance Jacob Parigault, the *sot-souris* of the mulquiniers. Fourteen or fifteen years had not in the least degree lessened his love of fun or talent for foolery, while they had considerably increased his impudence. Long prescription, which is the licence of a great many other placemen and the privilege of their buffooneries, had established all his rights to be insolent and troublesome to the whole town of Cambray, and even up to the gates of the bishop's palace.

With the lower part of his body inclosed in a wooden horse, on which one might have sworn he was really mounted—for a housing of red cloth covered his legs and fell down to the ground—the *sot-souris* trotted and gallopped, or

at least appeared to do so, through the crowd, and scattered about his gross jests and vulgar repartees, the best of which were inspired by his conscious impunity, and by sundry *bottrines* of wine, freely quaffed at the expense of the corporation. He was encouraged and supported in all his sallies by the shouts of laughter which burst from the mulquiniers, the clapping of hard palms, and every other demonstration of applause.

Madame Bertha and Lydoric, escorted by Severin, looked on from a little mount not far from the drawbridge of the palace, but outside its precincts, on the animated spectacle offered by the crowd. The *sot-souris* recognized the canon's sister, and came prancing round and round her and her young companion, in the hope of receiving the usual slight gratification for his foolery. But he gained nothing by the volts and demivolts, and other grotesque manœuvrings of his wooden warhorse. He saluted over and over again with his long wooden sword, and paid some overcharged compliments, all for nought. Madame Bertha had left her *escarcelle* (the portable pocket of those days) at home.

Disappointed, and a little irritated at Madame Bertha's contemptuous indifference and vinegar-looks, the half drunken *sot-souris* began to fling familiar and rather impertinent jokes at the old lady. Severin mildly entreated him to be more respectful.

"Saint Nitouche! patron of mine! protect and guard me!" cried Panjanet, making a thrust with his wooden sword, half in jest half in earnest, at the young man. "So, my young champion, you have attainted my honour, and touched the tip of my scutcheon! We must enter the lists. Very well, be it so! I am ready. And as for you, you must, by way of casque, clap one of the cook your father's copper pots on your head, —and a kiss from the gipsy's daughter here shall be the prize for the victor!"

At these outrageous words Lydoric blushed deep with mingled shame and anger, and she could not restrain her tears; for she saw that the insult offered her was greatly relished by the crowd. In fact, she was not extremely popular, for her high spirit had at times shewn itself not to sympathize at all with the low-born or vulgar. Besides which, the burghers were almost con-

stantly at variance, and sometimes at open war with the canons of the cathedral, on questions of privilege, which the chapter was on all occasions endeavouring to diminish in proportion as the people strove to increase them. It was natural enough therefore for the lower orders, of which the crowd was now chiefly composed, the guilds having begun to march homewards, to enjoy the rough bantering of the fool, at the expense of the sister and the dependants of a canon.

Severin, anxious to put an end to this disgraceful and vexatious scene, and to relieve Lydorie from her annoyance, gently strove to make way through the crowd. But instead of facilitating his retreat, or shewing any consideration for his companions, the people opposed their passage; and the *sot-souris*, in the heat of his insolence, threw his arm round Lydorie's neck, and made the air resound with the gross echo of an audacious kiss.

This outrage was instantly followed by a well-directed blow from Severin's fury-nerved and rage-propelled fist, which knocked the fool clean down, covered his face with blood, and sent him and his horse most ludicrously tumbling, in a

style which no Centaur ever before exhibited. Yet nobody laughed.

At the sight of their beloved buffoon so rudely handled, the rabble sent up a yell that carried fright to the inmost heart of the well-disposed—for it was a voice well known.

"'*Aie! aie!* we are murdered! we are murdered!" the regular battle-cry of a Cambray mob, was now heard on all sides; while a desperate rush, defeating its own object, was made against Severin; but before any of the too-anxious mob could seize upon him, through the impediments made by the general attempt, the bishop's archers hurried to his rescue, and a fearful melée was the instant consequence.

The rabble and the discontented burghers, who soon joined in the riot, being unarmed, came badly off in the contest. The daggers of the archers cut and thrust with serious effect, while the mob could only return awkward thumps of very unscientific fists, or blows of occasional bludgeons, with which however they dealt severe punishment here and there.

In the mean time, Severin took advantage of the tumult to pass the drawbridge and enter the

castle, with his double load; no easy matter, for while one leant on him with a gentle, but agitated pressure, embarrassing every step by the excitement she created, the other was a complete dead weight, having nearly lost her senses from fright.

The archers, fiercely assailed by large reinforcements of the people, now slowly retreated. Thanks to their steady front, they got clear off with only a few broken heads or bruised limbs, and succeeded in raising the drawbridge without leaving one of their comrades in the power of the mob. But the latter, inflamed to madness by the sight of at least thirty of their killed or wounded friends, determined on other means of vengeance, with all the wild ferocity of not only those, but what ought to be better, days.

It was but the affair of an hour, in spite of the admonitions and threats of the grand bailiff, to seize on all the barriers of the town, and tear down the toll-houses, while the great bell of St. Gery sounded the tocsin to all the country round. Four or five thousand desperate rioters were soon assembled, with the sole object of plunder and devastation. The first place of any force

attempted to be carried, was the fort of Selles, which made small resistance; next, the town-house, where the bailiff and the magistrates, paralysed by fear,—the sure characteristic of all corrupt corporations in the hour of trial—sat arguing and suggesting while they should have been out in the streets at the head of their police, facing the danger which in nine cases out of ten flies before the boldness it would strive to appal, and giving example and heart to the better order of burghers, who only want such on like occasions, to arm and fight in defence of their property and good order.

The town-house, the abbey of St. Hubert, the mansions of the grand vicar, Canon Watermetz's cousin, and of the archdeacon of Brussels, with those of several of the canons who lived in the city, were soon a prey to the flames, first being pillaged from garret to cellar.

In the bishop's palace all was confusion and dismay. The alarmed prelate held an irregular council of all who chose to give advice or suggest a means of good. But of the hall-full of functionaries, lay or elerical. not one seemed

able to do any thing better than heap abuse on poor Severin, the innocent cause of this alarming revolt.

And now the burghers, in more regular approach, but still bellowing furiously for revenge, rushed onwards, carrying ladders to scale the walls of the palace defences. There were but poor means of defence against these formidable preparations; for the armed guard within the palace was never considerable, and the capture of the Fort de Selles gave the enemy almost the command of the place.

But even had there been men enough to defend the palace, it did not contain more than two days' provisions; and suppose even that it could hold out so long, it must then be surrendered at discretion, unless, indeed, the chieftains of the bishop's free-fiefs, as they were called, came to his reverence's assistance. But there was little reliance to be placed on the allegiance of these turbulent marauders, who were more likely to side with the people than check the revolt.

But a sudden and chance circumstance hap-

pily changed this desperate state of things; and the instrument of the change was no other than the original cause of the evil.

Jacob Parigault had been carried home by some of his mob patrons. They chose to consider him at least three quarters dead, although he had been only stunned by Severin's blow, and the stupefaction which followed was entirely caused by intoxication; so that when, after a couple of hours' sleep, his wife told him all that had passed, and much of what was passing, the shrewd buffoon rapidly saw the reality of his own position, and seriously reflected on the probable consequences that would accrue if matters went on much further in the way they were going.

"How will all this end?" thought the *sot-sougis*, not much wishing to revert to the way in which it began. "Why thus—they may take and sack the palace, and kill the bishop—Good! Then comes the emperor, furious and grasping—So! Next, all the rich burghers get clear out of the scrape, by the force of sundry bags of golden crowns—Well! After that, the mass of the rioters are pardoned—it would be impossible

to hang them *all*—Excellent! And then, what is to become of me? An example must be made—the bishop's honour appeased—the emperor's dignity avenged—Very well! What so easy as to gibbet poor Jacob Parigault? Who would say a word in favour of the *sot-souris?* He would never be missed, for the world has fools enough to fill his place! My windpipe swells at the thought of it! No, no, the gallows in Cut-throat Cross shall not see my body dangling on it, if my poor wit holds good—away, away!"

Parigault was making ready to sally forth, all the while he was soliloquizing; and he was soon capering and prancing, fresher than ever, on his wooden horse, in the midst of the mob, and under the walls of the palace. The crowd hailed him wherever he appeared with shouts of welcome and bursts of laughter; and the ludicrous gravity with which he acted the character of general-in-chief, amused the observers so much, that it turned their attention away from the main object of their business there; and not a ladder was attempted to be placed against the ramparts.

Thus gaining time, the *sot-souris* turned in

his mind the best means of persuading the citizens to abandon the intended assault, when the accidental circumstance before alluded to came to the aid of his projects, and he quickly availed himself of it. And it must be here remarked, that the richest and most sensible of the burghers, among whom were Master le Baudain, and Master Eustace de Dinault, saw the revolt with sore affliction. They knew well that their pockets would have to pay the damage when the emperor came to the aid of the bishop, which he assuredly would, for he swore on occasion of the last riots, by his hopes of Paradise and by the relics of his saint, that he would make the heaviest purse in Cambray hang loose and flabby, if the citizens again provoked him! The worthies just mentioned were, therefore, much delighted to see the ready witted Parigault again appear, and they took care to encourage his evident disposition to settle matters quietly, when both his and their object was marvellously facilitated by a new arrival on the tumultuous scene.

Little imagining what had happened in the town, and believing that the procession of the guilds alone had caused the large assemblage in

the neighbourhood of the palace, Magalouffe approached by a narrow street leading up to the bishop's residence, riding quietly on his mule in his usual attitude of consequential ease. Behind him rode two clerks of the kitchen, leading each two sumpter horses laden with provisions, which the learned cook had himself sallied out that morning in search for, in various villages of the neighbourhood, each celebrated for some particular object of provender. And as his mule ambled on, he profoundly cogitated on the most palatable manner of doing justice to a magnificent salmon-trout which he carried in a basket on his crupper, unwilling to entrust to any other carriage the finest fish that he had ever known to be taken in the Scheldt.

He ended, however, with the resolution of serving up the trout with a sauce of sweet almonds, white-wine, and hydromel; when he was roused up by the well-known voice of the *sot-souris*, who called out to him loudly :—

"Welcome, welcome, thou king of the kitchen! But more welcome still, in thy capacity of peace-maker—welcome brother ambassador!"

Magalouffe repulsed the buffoon with all his

accustomed disdain; but the latter, redoubling his volubility, and capering close to the cook, made it appear to the crowd, in the midst of which they now were, that he and Magalouffe were closely whispering together; while, in fact, the tormented cook was only heartily cursing him, and ordering him to go about his business. But Parigáult, raising his hand for silence, as if he were going to proclaim the result of a secret conference, exclaimed,—

"List! burghers, list! His reverence the lord bishop, satisfied with the frolicsome feats already done—and wishing that we might all repose from our merry-making, has sent, as you see, his head cook, armed with full powers to treat with your head fool—not without rich presents such as you witness, as is fitting so serious an embassy on so joyous a day.

"His reverence is slightly of opinion—and perhaps you will all agree with him—that good humour and jollity have gone a trifle too far—but in consideration of Easter sports, nothing that has passed to-day is to be remembered to-morrow;—that is positively stipulated between us

two;—is it not, very worthy brother? Is it not, most excellent plenipotentiary?"

With these words he threw his arms round Magalouffe's neck, to the infinite increase of mob merriment. The cook prepared to reply, and then to shake off the fool; but the latter strained him so close that he could not stir, and stifled all his efforts to make himself heard by loud calls on the people to the following effect:—

"Now, away with you all, men, women, and children—home, home! Take care that the men-at-arms of the lord of Mivart, who are now galloping full speed towards the city, don't come too fast for ye! Away! and my blessing be with ye all!"

With these words he made many grotesque imitations of the bishop's manner of blessing his riotous flock. The well-disposed burghers followed up his efforts, by rapid reasonings with the people, already tired with their excesses, and agreeing that they had gone too far.

"Right! right! Wise men all, follow the fool's advice! Home! home! Long live his reverence the bishop!" and the like cries of peace

now rose up on all sides. The crowd dispersed with inconceivable rapidity; and many a bold fellow, throwing behind him looks of inquiry and alarm for the threatened men-at-arms, hurried into his house or hovel, being more anxious to bar his own door than to break open those of the bishop's palace.

A deputation from the town waited on the bishop the next morning; and Monseigneur Godefroy de Fontaine, after a more than usually long lecture, granted pardon to the respective citizens, the *sol-souris* included, on the following conditions:—

'1st. That the provost of the town, in presence of the bailiff and forty burghers, should forthwith procure and return to their true owners all the pillaged property.

2d. That the town should pay a fine of two thousand *livres tournois*, a reimbursement for the damage by fire and otherwise, and that ten burghers were to remain hostages till the fulfilment of the clause.

3d. That a hundred burghers, in white shirts, and tapers in hand, should march bare-footed

round the town, and do public penance in the episcopal church.

4th. That no guild should henceforward carry a standard without the express permission of the bishop.

5th. That the bells of St. Gery's church, which had sounded the tocsin of revolt, should be unblessed, and muffled up for the space of a whole year.

"Hard conditions—cruel hard, Master Eustace!" exclaimed Le Baudain to his brother burgher, as the bishop's secretary read the above stated terms of accommodation to the deputation. "What must we do?"

"Accept and sign, accept and sign, brother Baudain! and not a moment to be lost either.—If the troops of the free-fiefs pour into town, as they have been doing all the morning, we are ruined. The emperor will soon be at the heels of the feudal lords, as the lion follows the jackall when prey is to be run down."

"But two thousand *livres tournois*, friend Dinault!"

"No matter, though it were ten! Our privi-

leges, brother! our monopoly! Come, come, brother, think of those—accept and sign, sign quickly, brother.—Eh! what sounds are those? Trumpets, again! hark to the clattering of the cavaliers as they come in, the free fiefs at their head!"

"St. Mary guide me! 'Tis true enough, Master de Dinault! Oh, 'tis a grievous sum, a hard, hard condition! Three hundred at least will fall to my share! Eh! what a clangour and clashing is there! What is that, what is it, Master Eustace?"

"'Tis the bloody lord of Quesnil with his archers and men at arms, that's all," replied Dinault drily.

"The fierce and freebooter lord of Quesnil! The holy martyrs be our speed!" exclaimed the avaricious old citizen. "The pen, the pen, brother Dinault! There—I have signed—we are well off, after all."

"I think so too," said Dinault, placing his mark, for he could not write his name; and the rest of the deputies gladly followed his example.

And thus ended the memorable riot, distinguished in the records of the town by the quaint title of "The Trinity Troubles."

CHAPTER III.

Among the most distinguished qualities of first-rate cooks, there was one which Magalouffe possessed in uncommon perfection, and that one was punctuality. At the first pull of the cord which gave to the dinner-bell that longed-for sound, so dear to the hungry lovers of good cheer, who abounded in the episcopal palace, Magalouffe and his various assistants were invariably ready to place the first dish on the table. Never, no never once, had he earned the reproach of causing the appetites of their reverences, the feasters, to wait; no, not for as long as the chaplain could chant an extra *Ave*. And never had the intendant of the palace to ask, "Are we ready, Master Magalouffe?" The smoking soup tureen spoke for itself and saved him the trouble.

Now it so happened that four days after the important events mentioned in the last chapter,

the varlet in waiting pulled the bell-cord, and sounded the cheering summons to the mid-day repast. The bishop came in, in due form of state, preceded by his chaplain and ordinaries, and followed by the rosy-gilled canons and others who had the honourable privilege of a seat at his dinner-table. But great was the astonishment of all, on perceiving the board unfurnished with edibles—a desolate blank, with the exception of the white rolls, or *pains-tailloirs*, placed beside each cover, and the furnishing which was in the province of the groom of the cupboard, rather than that of the cook.

And well may be imagined the haste and hurry, the bustle and the fluster, with which the half horrified intendant scudded along the corridors and passages between the refectory and the kitchen of the episcopal palace.

Magalouffe, the while, like one struck by the hand of Heaven, sat stultified in a corner of his kitchen, unable or unwilling to reply to any of the anxious inquiries for orders put to him from his numerous auxiliaries. And many a whisper of wonderment went round these savoury satellites of the great luminary thus eclipsed. Much

did they marvel as to the nature of the trouble that could so have overcast him. Great indeed must it be, thought they, for never before had grief—not even for the death of his wife—caused him to omit a particle of the important duties of his office.

The voice of the intendant, tremulously demanding the cause of the alarming delay, made Magalouffe jump up from his deep reverie; and with amazing promptitude and presence of mind he gave his orders to his subalterns, so as that in much less time than might have been expected a dinner was served up—good in comparison to that which a less celebrated artist might be proud to furnish, but certainly unworthy the fame of Magalouffe.

His business done, he gave himself freely up again to his sorrows; and sinking on a seat, covered his hot face with both his greasy hands and wept bitterly.

"Why, Magalouffe!" said the compassionate intendant; "this is too bad—'tis unmanly so to afflict yourself for a dinner being a little too late. A very venial offence this, my good friend, and you weep as if you repented a mortal sin. Re-

member, as his reverence the lord bishop often says, citing the Holy Scriptures, 'It is written, the wise man falls seven times in one day.'"

"Ah, Master Intendant! my grief is indeed great, and good cause have I for it! By the blessed St. Martha! if I knew one in the whole district of the Cambresis who was fit to hold the white wand of episcopal cook, I would this hour resign it into his hand, and I would hasten to fill in some Carmelite convent, where they eat only roots plain boiled in water, the degraded functions of a brother vegetable dresser!"

The intendant made a new attempt to console Magalouffe, but the reader will remember that it was not his humour to be stopped short when his heart was full or his passion high.

"Oh, why, why," continued he, "did it not please Heaven and my holy patroness to keep me firm in my first intention of teaching my son the noble science which has gained me such fame? Instructed by me, he might have handed down the name of Magalouffe from generation to generation! He might have been episcopal cook! And tell me, Master Intendant, where is a prouder title to be found than that which I

bear, and which gives rank and precedence among the twenty-four free-fiefs of the bishopric, and confers the privilege of treating of the feudal affairs, civil as well as criminal, of his reverence? * Accursed be the officious interference of Canon Watermetz! His reverence the lord bishop has awhile ago struck me to the heart, touching this ill-starred son of mine. He heaped on him the harshest epithets, and swore —no his reverence did not swear an oath but he looked one—that little was wanting to make him refuse to Severin his promised letters of ordination. Yes, yes! It is to me he said that—ay, and more—to me, who have reached my sixty-

* The twenty-four free-fiefs (*francs-fiévés*) were the great provost of the palace, the *maître-d'hôtel* in ordinary, the master of the hunt, the grand master of the fisheries, the grand butler, the master of the ceremonies, the comptroller, the head cook (*grand queux*), &c. &c.

"The great bailiff," says Carpentier, "chief of the *haute-cour* of the palace, was authorized, when the case required, to summon the twenty-four free-fiefs to debate on the civil, criminal, and other affairs which concerned the jurisdiction of the chieftain." It is not clearly specified in this quotation, whether the cook and the rest had a right of interference in ecclesiastical matters.

fourth year without ever before being disgraced by a reproach for me or mine! Oh! why did Father Nicholas ever drag the boy from his nook in this comfortable kitchen? What if he had scorched fifty peacocks, more or less, what matter! If he had never taken to those foolish studies that bring us nothing but disgrace, he had learned his trade, and the name of Magalouffe had been unpolluted!"

"Nay, nay, worthy Magalouffe, his reverence may be mollified!" said the Intendant.

"Mollified! Do you think, then, I would condescend——."

"Hut! tut—you go too far, Master Magalouffe."

"No, Sir Intendant—the bishop himself allows that I am right—he has acknowledged his error, and strove to repair it by promising to ordain my son to-morrow. Praise be to his reverence for his gracious intentions—you need say nothing to him of what has passed between us—but his reparation comes too late; I shall never recover the injury done to my honour!"

After Magalouffe had thus unburthened him-

self, he retired to his private apartments, and sent to summon his son to an interview. Severin soon arrived. He looked flushed and agitated. He had just come from a long and animated *tête-à-tête* with Lydoric. Kneeling, as was customary, at his father's feet, he asked his blessing, which being duly granted, he modestly inquired for what purpose he was favoured with the infrequent order to wait on his parent?

Magalouffe drew himself up with a certain assumption of dignity which never sat worse on him than when he was confronted with his son, who, he could not help acknowledging, was of a much higher order of humanity than himself. He however began a fluent enumeration of all the bishop's complaints, adding a few of his own suggestions. His voice, which he strove at first to pitch in the due key of paternal solemnity, grew insensibly from low and deep to high and harsh; and having continued for some time in that tone, it suddenly dropped again to what he meant for tenderness, but which was at best but an artificial whine, somewhat like a fanatical ranter, who, after thundering forth a description

of hell, concludes his sermon with a faint toned blessing. Thus it was that Magalouffe wound up his tirade with an announcement of the bishop's benign intention of ordaining the culprit on the morrow.

"Father," said Severin, in a timid but firm tone. "I can never become a priest."

At these daring words he raised his eyes, and he was much emboldened by observing a total absence of anger in his father's countenance.

"I never can—I never will be a priest," repeated he, with less diffidence and more decision.

At every word so uttered, a torrent of balm seemed to pour itself over the erewhile excited feelings of Magalouffe. He could not speak; but thus ran on his thoughts as he gazed on his son.

"Oh, it is too much! My blessed patroness, St. Martha, has at length taken pity on the sorrow of her unworthy servant, and inspired the heart of my boy with the thrice blessed wish to become a cook, like his father! He is, to be sure, a little too old—but never mind! I will so work at him, that in four years he shall be the second best cook in the Cambresis!"

"I am deeply in love with a young maiden," continued Severin, "and we have just now plighted our troth, and promised ourselves to each other for life and death."

"Thou shalt have her, my boy! She shall be thine, I promise thee! Oh, my son, my dear Severin, what would I not do, what not sacrifice to see thee thus fairly renounce thy foolish learning and fantastic notions, for the solid honour of becoming a cook!"

"You are mistaken, father, I have no intention, no want of becoming a cook to secure myself a fair subsistence. My skill as a rubricator will always suffice for that, and even allow me to provide comfortably for her whom I adore, my beloved Lydorie."

"Lydorie! Lydorie!" exclaimed the father, almost frantic with vexation and rage, "What! a base born gipsy girl—the child of a—— of an outcast reprobate, odious to God and the saints! —Listen, Severin! If ever you again utter a word or breathe a thought of this infamy—if you ever again name the name of that wretched girl, I curse you on the spot! Enough! leave me!"

Neither the tears, the entreaties, nor the despair of the young man could produce the least effect on the old one—if, indeed, they did not the more exasperate him. He ended the interview by driving Severin from his door, with orders never more to appear in his sight.

Severin, indignant as he was, nevertheless returned with a heavy heart to the apartments of Canon Watermetz.

When Lydorie heard from him the recital of his father's cruel obstinacy, though Severin softened down all his grossness towards her, the too sensitive girl fainted in her lover's arms. And when the nearly as agitated youth succeeded in bringing her to herself, she burst into a flood of tears.

But in this moment of misery there was for Severin an exquisite delight—an essence which turned his whole cup of bitterness to balm; for Lydorie, for the first time, lavished on him the most tender epithets, without a feeling of reserve, and returned his warm embraces by others not less warm. Her head dropped on his bosom, and her hand was locked in his. Thus passed

the remainder of that day, of such mixed suffering and joy.

At last it was absolutely necessary that they should part. Severin retired to his chamber. His feelings underwent a thousand fluctuations. "She loves me—and I must quit her! She loves me—and I must never see her more! To live without her is worse, far worse than death! Live without her! No, no, I cannot live!"

So did the distracted lover soliloquize; and then, fevered, empassioned, frantic, he seized a knife, plunged it in his breast, and fell on the ground.

When he recovered his senses, Madam Bertha, the canon, and Lydoric stood by his bedside, weeping. They had believed him to be dead, having discovered him insensible and bathed in his blood. Father Nicholas, who was deeply versed in the secrets of the healing art, attentively examined the wound, and announced, that so far from being dangerous he warranted Severin's recovery within a week.

Lydorie managed matters so well with the old people, that the office of nurse was entrusted to

her; and she alone watched over her lover during this first night of actual woe.

In the morning, just as she was preparing to quit his bed-side, Madame Bertha being about to relieve her, she placed a silver ring upon his finger, and said,—

"As long as thou keepest this ring, my beloved, so long shall Lydoric be thine, faithful and tender to the last!"

The delighted youth strove to reply, in a few words, to these sweet professions; but before they could find utterance, Lydoric was gone, and Madame Bertha in her place. Severin turned round in his bed; and thought of the delicious pledge, and pressed the silver ring to his lips.

The prognostics of the canon were verified. Severin became quickly convalescent. He easily imposed on his simple old friends by attributing his wound to an accident; and Lydoric found no difficulty in persuading them to yield to her the principal care of the patient—her brother, as she was in the habit of calling him. She passed the chief part of each day in his room.

One day, however, passed over without her making her appearance from morning till night.

Need we point out or dwell on the torturing anxiety of Severin during this interval? At length the good old canon came; and placing himself by Severin's side, thus began:—

"A well-a-day! my poor Severin, is it then come to this? I know every thing—your father has told me all—your unfortunate attachment. And now I understand how it was you got this unlucky wound. But since Heaven, in its mercy, saved you from the crime of suicide, it would little become me—a poor sinner like yourself—to show myself more severe. I therefore make you no reproach.—Listen to me now, calmly, my dear boy! I have spent nearly the whole day in vain efforts to appease your father. He is inexorable. He will neither see you, nor forgive you. On the other hand, his reverence the bishop is furious at your refusal to enter into holy orders. He insists on your leaving the palace, and it is not possible for you to remain in the town after such disgrace as that. And, in another point of view, how could I, my dear Severin, lend my sanction to an attachment disapproved of by your only parent? You see all your difficulties—you must meet them with cou-

rage and patience, and put all your trust in the compassion and the goodness of Heaven!—Here, my child, here in this purse are thirty golden crowns—take them, and keep them safely! To-morrow you will quit Cambray, with my brother the grand vicar, who is going on a mission from his reverence to the archbishop of Rheims. My brother will find you protectors there, and your great talent as a rubricator will find you an ample livelihood until we may succeed in softening your father's anger.—Farewell, then, my dear child, remember those who brought you up, and who love you dearly—but who have little chance of seeing you more—for we are old, Severin, and God will not be late in calling us to him! His holy will be done! Farewell, farewell, Severin! and for want of a father's blessing, let that of an old man, who loves you like a father, be on your head!"

"Better, oh, a thousand times better! You are my father!" exclaimed the youth, throwing himself into the canon's arms, and they wept together for many minutes.

The next morning, just at day break, as Severin took his sad departure from the long-loved

home, and when passing under the windows of Lydorie's chamber he gave one longing look upwards, a scrap of parchment fell on the neck of his mule. He caught it with a trembling hand, while his heart palpitated and his eyes swam, and he read the following words, the delicious confirmation of the last that were spoken to him by his adored one:

"As long as thou keepest this ring, my beloved, so long shall Lydorie be thine, faithful and tender to the last."

Severin arrived duly, without adventure, and in perfectly recovered health, at Rheims, where he soon became the particular favourite of the archbishop, who was a great patron of the arts, and particularly of those which related to the embellishment of illuminated manuscripts and missals.

"But why, my good youth," said the prelate on frequent occasions, when he was particularly pleased with Severin's exertions, "why do you so obstinately refuse to follow your early intentions, and enter on the duties of the divine office? If you will even now consent to be ordained, I promise you that before the end of a year, you

shall be my private chaplain, with a good benefice—the very best that falls into my gift."

Severin thanked the archbishop, and thanked him with sincere gratitude. But, with a deep sigh, he invariably added, that he could not have the hypocrisy to offer to God a heart wholly absorbed by a mortal passion.

CHAPTER IV.

It was, as nearly as possible, two years after the departure of Severin, that Lydoric, sitting in the embrasure of one of the great windows of the palace, and looking out on the sad formality of what was called the bishop's pleasure-garden, recalled the early passages of her life, and wept.

Orphan of a gipsy—adopted from charity—destined one day, perhaps, to live wretchedly by the work of her own hands, when her benefactors should be no more—and now, after two years of hope, no nearer than when she lost him, to a union with him she loved so much, and with little chance of ever seeing him again!

What young person on earth more mournfully situated than she? If Master Magalouffe might at length but allow his stubborn tyranny to be softened! If he would but take compassion on his banished son and the wretched Lydoric! But alas, alas! these are delusive notions—Nothing will conquer the pride of the old cook

He is now rich, very rich; and though not descended from a noble lineage, he has not at least to blush for the mother who bore him!

Why, oh why had not Heaven given, instead of the infamy of base birth, a rich inheritance, and a noble descent? How happy would she have passed her quiet days with love, retirement, and Severin! How far above wealth and grandeur is affection! But how exquisite to shower all the goods of fortune on those we love!

While Lydorie was wrapt in thought, composed of combinations like these, the servant came to tell her that Madame Bertha required her presence in all haste. Terrified lest her old and ailing protectress might be suddenly taken ill, she rapidly wiped away her tears, and descended to the wainscoted saloon, where she found Madame Bertha and Father Nicholas, in high health and apparently in a mixture of astonishment and pleasure, while near them was seated a stranger, dressed in the hat and cloak which by their cockle-shell ornaments announced the wearer to be a pilgrim returned from the Holy Land. The pale face, sunken eyes, loose gray beard, and long and bony hands of the un-

known filled Lydorie with a vague feeling of terror, that made her cling close to the canon, who tenderly pressed her hand in his.

The stranger wept and sobbed aloud, and struck his clenched fist against his breast, exclaiming,

"Lord have mercy on me! Heaven forgive me!"

After some time passed in these exclamations of remorse, he raised his piercing black eyes on Lydorie's face, and said,

"Yes, yes, 'tis she! There is now no doubt—'tis she! Yes, yes! Even if this silver medallion found round her infant neck was not here to prove her identity, it were enough to look on her—she is her mother's living image!"

As the pilgrim spoke thus, Lydorie thrilled with terror and disgust. Her knees shook, and she was near falling to the ground.

"Oh misery, misery!" thought she.—"This pilgrim is my father—the husband of the murdered gipsy woman!"

And already she felt as if torn from the arms of her only friends, and forced to a base and wandering life of beggary and disgrace.

"Shew me, shew me quickly the small black mark that she bears on her right shoulder," said the pilgrim.

The almost inanimate girl submitted passively, as Madame Bertha removed the wimple from her lovely neck, loosened the upper agraffe of her pourpoint, and bared the round full beauty of her alabaster shoulder. When the pilgrim saw the slight mark—the only farther evidence he required—he dropped on one knee, and bending his forehead to the very floor, he said aloud and in solemn tones,

"Noble Countess de Coucy, I do homage to you as my sovereign liege-lady; and I swear by the merits of the blessed cross to remain for ever, in life and death, your faithful vassal, as in duty and allegiance bound!—Oh, right noble lady! grievously guilty have I been towards you—but grant me mercy and pardon! Not for my own sake, for I deserve neither—but for the honour of our noble family—in the name of the blessed Saviour, who, dying on Mount Calvary forgave his murderers—in the name and for the merits of the holy Virgin, take pity on my remorse, and pardon me, ere I rise from before your feet."

All that Lydorie saw and heard seemed but a dream—a delicious one certainly, but which she dreaded was to be at every moment broken. She listened, fearing to draw her breath, to stir, or move a lip or an eye, lest the most trifling change might break the charm in which she loved to believe herself bound.

And while she thus stood, like one enchanted, and the mysterious pilgrim remained prostrate before her, the worthy Canon Watermetz, almost as much overjoyed as she was, recounted briefly to her by what providential ways all the wondrous discovery came about. The prostrate pilgrim was Lydorie's own uncle, the Lord of Mont Roche. On the death of his brother, Lydorie's father, he caused his niece to be kidnapped and carried off, while a mere infant by a gipsy woman, who for the temptation of a large reward undertook the diabolical task of stealing the child from its distracted nurse, and promised to carry it away so far that no one in Normandy should ever run the chance of hearing of its fate. The Lord of Mont Roche had been as well, if not better satisfied, that its fate had been disposed of more close to home, provided it had been more

surely. A dressed up piece of wood was put in the cradle in place of Lydoric, and the absent mother, like almost all those on the spot, was deceived by the report of the infant's death. To keep the secret the more securely, the Lord of Mont Roche felt himself forced to put more than one accomplice to death; and loaded with crimes, he became the possessor of the territory of his late brother, the Count of Coucy.

But remorse weighed heavy on his soul. Sleep flew from his pillow; and believing himself approaching to his end, he confessed all to a holy man, a hermit of great renown. This pious confident having first cured him of his malady, enjoined him to employ all means for the recovery of his niece, to restore her to her possessions, and implore her forgiveness. And as a preliminary step he recommended a pilgrimage, which the penitent immediately set about performing.

After some time the Lord of Mont Roche succeeded in obtaining tidings of his niece, known at that time by the title of the Orphan of Cambray, and from many circumstances which came

to his knowledge he had no doubt of her being the person he sought.

Lydorie raised her repentant uncle from the ground; and in the rapture of her feelings she not merely forgave him the early wrong he did her, but was disposed to drop on her knees, in turn, and thank him cordially for what she was more disposed to consider his free gift than able to comprehend as her own right. The pilgrim soon retired, a weight being removed from his soul, to prepare himself to appear fitly as a renovated member of society, and to conduct his niece to her domains, and procure her recognition by the vassals as their legitimate countess and liege-lady.

"Countess! Countess! Vast domains! Splendid castles! Men-at-arms—varlets—grooms—followers without number! maids of honour! maids of honour!! Dresses sparkling with jewels! the first place at the justs!

"Oh! why, instead of a learned clerk and a skilful rubricator, why was he not a gallant cavalier, expert at the use of lance, and sword, and battle-axe? How delightful would it be to

give him from this hand the chief prize of the tournament!"

Such were Lydorie's first ideas—and so did her thoughts run on, during the first sleepless night she had passed since that following Severin's departure from the Bishop's palace.

As soon as it was known in the city of Cambray that Lydorie was all at once discovered to be a noble lady and one of the richest heiresses of Normandy, the only point of contention was to settle who could first succeed in offering her congratulations, and making her presents, which latter few of the donors would ever have dreamt of throwing away on a poor orphan who might have needed them.

Among the many conversions to a conviction of Lydorie's sudden and amazing worth, Magatouffe's was not the last or the least sincere. He had a true instinct of belief in the virtue of high rank; and he chuckled with delight at the notion of having a countess for his daughter-in-law. He therefore resolved on paying a speedy visit to the new-found lady, to inform her in set terms that he had decided on giving his consent to her marriage with his son. Dressed in his

best suit of household livery, which consisted of a gaudy mixture of scarlet, yellow, and white, his pourpoint, his hose, and his short cloak being all of different colours, the long gown and hood of purple camlet hanging in loose drapery over all, he prepared for a visit which he began seriously to consider as one of no common occasion.

"Might it not be better," thought he, as he tucked up the skirts of his gown under his arm and walked slowly along the corridor, "that I had waited till she sent to beg my consent once more, and requested that I would receive her in my own apartment? Yes, that without doubt had been more dignified—though no! perhaps not. I have hitherto treated the poor thing so roughly on every advance, that she dares not make another, and it is magnanimous to unbend, particularly towards a female. Yes, yes, Magalouffe, you are right, you are right! Enough has been done to uphold the paternal consequence and the honour of an episcopal cook. Let me see, therefore, what I can now do for the happiness of these poor children, towards whom after all I have been perhaps too harsh."

When Magalouffe entered the saloon now appropriated to Lydorie's use, she was sitting in familiar conversation with the Canon Watermetz and Sir Eustace de Lens, a nephew by the mother's side of the bishop, and a young French noble of gay and sprightly character and somewhat too dissipated and libertine in his way of life. The small patrimonial estate of this young knight touched on the borders of the county of Coucy. Now, it very soon struck him, on hearing of the extraordinary and fortunate vicissitude which had befallen Lydorie, that to blend the two domains together, and surmount his shield with the scutcheon and coronet of a count would marvellously suit his purposes, and he therefore lost no time in procuring, through his reverend uncle, a proper introduction to the orphan heiress.

The poor protégé of Father Nicholas and his old sister had never heard the flashy and flowery diction of high-born youths. So no sooner did Sir Eustace commence his flatteries than she felt a flutter of delight quite new to her; and even after his first visit, she could not avoid making an involuntary comparison between him and poor

Severin, who, alas for true love! knew not how to flirt and talk soft nonsense in this fluent style.

The cunning Sir Eustace marked well his progress, and saw all his advantages over the simple but vain heart of Lydorie; and he was not long in filling it completely with feelings which nature never intended it to know. If her heart was tender, her head was weak—too weak to bear without intoxication the high-toned flavour of the incense which was now every day thrown up before her. To believe Sir Eustace, —and Lydorie firmly believed him—it was not merely on becoming known to her that he discovered her noble origin. The very first time he had seen her passing through the palace court he had been struck with her distinguished air, and had asked who was the noble maiden, whom he was surprised never to have seen among the proud company of dames and knights which he was accustomed to meet at his uncle's table.

Such were the deceitful compliments that caused a smile on Lydorie's lips and a deep blush on her cheeks, when Master Magalouffe came bowing, with his usual self-important air,

into the room. At sight of the flashy young knight, who sat so familiarly chatting beside Lydorie, the inventor of the golden soup felt some misgivings. He strove to hide his embarrassment under a tone of assumed tenderness and vivacity. But he could not all at once recover his presence of mind, and forgetting all he had intended to say, he burst out rather abruptly as follows, pulling off his crimson cap, decorated with a thick gold band.

"Ah, Madame Lydorie, Countess, I beg pardon, Countess of—what's the title, Father Nicholas? Ah, madame, it is Severin that will rejoice at this good news, for now there is no obstacle to the marriage—none whatever—I give my full consent. I only waited for the two years' probation which I made a vow to St. Martha he should keep. By what day shall I have him back here? I hasten to send him the joyous intelligence, if another—and a fairer hand has not done so already! But if not, I will send off a trusty messenger forthwith. It will cost me two golden crowns—but no matter! By All Saints' day, and we are now only at St. Remy, my messenger will see the steeples of Rheims.

I have no fear of his fidelity or his speed—'tis Polycarpe, the cleverest clerk of my kitchen, cunning as a fox and cool as an ambassador."

"What on earth or under heaven is this old mountebank chattering about?" asked Sir Eustace, with a contemptuous smile, which made Magalouffe's heart sink, for he could not stand the ridicule that came from a bishop's nephew.

"He is speaking of a friend of my childhood," answered Lydorie, turning her blushing face aside. She dared not say "of my lover."

Magalouffe attributing the cold reception of his future daughter-in-law—as he considered her—to the anger which she cherished for his former severity, came closer to her, on the side opposite to where Sir Eustace sat, for he was glad to have some separation between them—and asked in a half whisper, "Shall I send for Severin, Madame Lydorie, or will you yourself write to him? Shall we fix for Christmas—or sooner if you like—the wedding that will make us all so happy?"

"The wedding! the wedding!" said Sir Eustace, bursting into a loud laugh. "By the three griffins of my shield! I guess what all

this grand secret is about. You are going to give one of your maids in marriage to the son of this cook?"

Lydorie smiled in a manner to give the knight reason to think he guessed rightly—and she blushed again! Alas for true love, once more!—it was for shame of her old affection.

That Magalouffe might not see either the smile or the blush, Lydorie turned her back on him quite. The blood of the episcopal cook rose high at this apparently designed affront. He therefore wheeled round and flounced out of the room, not sorry to escape from the renewed laugh of Sir Eustace, and calling St. Martha to witness that the Countess of Coucy stood as little chance as did the gipsy's daughter of marrying his son Severin! Bursting with rage and foaming with fury, he rushed into the kitchen, "all accoutred as he was," and there a horrid and intolerable scene met his rage-rolling eyes. During his absence a quarrel had arisen—clerks and scullions were mixed together in a desperate conflict—and three magnificent articles of flesh, poultry, and game, were frizzing and burning before the fire, so blackened and ruined that no

turnspit would have had the conscience to place them on the table of a pig-driver.

This was too much for the proud heart and excited feelings of Magalouffe. He attempted to utter a cry of anger and despair. He strove to raise his clenched fist—either in supplication to his saint, or to knock down the nearest rioter —but word and action were incomplete. A stroke of apoplexy laid him low, and a short convulsion terminated his career, on the scene of his many glories, and robed in the honourable livery of his state!

During all these strange and awful events, the faithful mind of Severin was continually picturing, night and day, the former happy scenes of life, and imagining new joys for the future in the dearly loved country of his youth—the scenes of his early, his only love. Every day acquiring wealth by the exertions of his industry, and under the protection of his powerful patron the archbishop, he reckoned on overcoming ere long the obstinate refusal of his father, without which this dutiful son was resolved in the first instance not to make Lydòrie his wife. But he was also determined, if his father proved immoveable in

his cruel opposition, to solicit an archiepiscopal dispensation, and to make himself happy be the consequences what they might.

"How grievous it will be to me," thought he, "should I be forced to cause pain to my father! But how sweet to be united to Lydoric—for I love her better than him!"

At last Severin found himself in all ways qualified to undertake the journey back to Cambray. He did not seek any means of announcing his approach to his old friend, or the beloved mistress of his heart. "No," said he, "I will take her by surprise even though she should faint for joy in my arms, as she once did from grief. How exquisite to kiss her into life again!"

The archbishop was so anxious to preserve his favourite from danger on the road, that he gave him an escort of two men-at-arms, well mounted like himself, to defend him from the manifold chances of robbery or assault, which the dislocated state of society rendered imminent in those days.

Severin at length set out, and trotted along, indifferent to the annoyances of snow, frost, or

rain—for it was the midst of winter—but he went to see his dear-loved Lydoric.

A journey of eighteen days brought him to the town of St. Quentin. It was Sunday when he arrived. His first duty was piously to hasten to the celebration of mass in the principal church. Now it so happened that at the very instant of his arrival at the holy edifice a marriage was about to take place. Severin saw by the outward preparations that such was the case, and his heart throbbed with delight in anticipating the day—the quick coming day, thought he,—when he should lead to the altar his own Lydoric, in her bridal dress and bridal blushes.

"Holy saints! how this young bride resembles her! Were it not for those robes of silk and velvet, that hat with golden points—a countess's coronet—I could swear it was she herself!"

Bursting impatiently through the crowd, he reached the foot of the altar. The armed halberdiers who guarded the aisle thought, from his determined step and mien, that he must be one of the official personages employed in the cere-

mony, the more so as he was richly badged and dressed in the honourable uniform of rubricator to the Archbishop of Rheims. They therefore gave him free passage.

"It is, it is Lydorie! there is no longer a doubt!" and with the conviction, a pang fierce as though a burning coal had fallen on his breast, fixed him to the spot. He gazed but moved not, until the priest who performed the nuptial ceremony by accident let fall the ring which he was just giving to the bridegroom, to place on the hand of her whose heart was perjured.

Severin darted forwards, and succeeded in picking up the ring before any other could reach it. His whole mind seemed roused into new and instant action by the thought that filled it now. He dexterously pulled from his own finger the silver ring which he had of old received from Lydoric, and he replaced the nuptial one with it. And while the bridegroom joyously placed this damning evidence of her falsehood on Lydoric's finger, her betrayed lover exclaimed in a sonorous tone of bitterness and mockery, "As long as thou keepest this ring, my beloved, so

long shall Lydorie be thine, faithful and tender to the last!"

At the first sound of the well-known voice Lydorie started back, and raised her eyes, and fixed them full on the speaker. Ere the sentence was finished she burst into a flood of tears, and hid her face in her husband's bosom.

"Well spoken, by my faith! fair clerk of his reverence of Rheims!" said Sir Eustace gaily, for he recognized Severin's livery. "What recompense must I give thee for thy apt response?"

But he to whom these light-hearted words were addressed was already out of sight. He had darted through the crowd, and was soon forgotten in the shouts of joy and clamorous congratulations with which the air was filled by the congregation that led the new-married couple from the church; Sir Eustace de Lens holding tenderly the while the fair hand of his bride, whose faltering step and downcast look were attributed to maiden bashfulness instead of womanly remorse.

CHAPTER V.

In the legends of the olden time, as in the actual life of man, days, weeks, and months, roll on imperceptibly almost; events die away, passions are absorbed, and feelings swallowed up in those which successively arise, like the waves that are followed and swallowed up by those which the swelling of the tide forces after them.

A full year had passed after the event we have just related. St. Quentin had almost lost the memory of the stranger who acted so extraordinary a part at the wedding of the Countess of Coucy; Rheims had nearly forgotten its chief rubricator, in admiration of the one who succeeded him in the archbishop's employ; and Cambray had found other topics to give food to its gossips, in place of the now old story of its orphan and her sudden elevation in the world.

The scene shifts now to Paris. Much is left untold in the legend, of what happened to the actors in our story during the year which we must now consider past and gone. Fancy may

fill up the chasm, but what follows may furnish hints enough to the imaginative mind.

And now the curfew-bell had just finished its solemn warning to the citizens. It was a night of deep gloom. Had it not been for the torches here and there glaring in front of the palace of King Philip, the citizens who hurried to their homes had infallibly knocked their heads in passing against the low columns and the gothic arcades, which stood high on the open place called the Grève, a sandy extent of waste ground that was bounded and washed by the waters of the Seine.

A young man came stealthily out from one of the houses in the neighbourhood of the palace. Flinging across his right shoulder the folds of his large cloak, to enable him no doubt to freely use his iron-ferelled stick in case of need, he set off at a quick pace. After having followed the course of the river for some time, he passed opposite the convent and the street of Hieres, and traced the whole length of the Quay of Ormes, of which the street of the *Paon-blanc* and that of Frosgier-l'Anier formed the two limits. He there stopped; and first looking cautiously

round to see that there was no observer nigh, he gently clapped his hands together twice.

The door of a small lodge, which flanked a garden-wall of immense height, now slowly opened, and a young woman, enveloped in a long mantle, came forth, and offered her trembling hand to the warm pressure which the young man was ready to give it.

"Severin!" said she, in a faltering voice, and after some minutes of delicious silence, broken only by the echoes of their deep-toned embraces; "My Severin, this meeting must be the last! You must leave this place to-morrow and forever—for our love is no longer what it was, no longer pure and innocent as in the days of our youth—it has now become criminal, and may, if you fly not——"

The young man only the more closely pressed her in his arms.

"Oh, yes, yes, Severin, we must part for ever! You must forget your Lydorie for ever—forget our early love, my falsehood, my faithlessness—our renewed acquaintance—this criminal passion! Farewell! Farewell, my Severin; for ever!"

While the agitated Lydorie thus spoke, Se-

verin remained as though stupified with surprise and grief. But when she withdrew her hand from his grasp and stepped back for the fulfilment of the purpose announced by her last words, he sprang forward, clasped her again in his arms, and exclaimed, "No, by heavens thou shalt not leave me! nor will I ever quit thee more! Thou art mine—mine own! My love, my mistress, my wife, every thing that is dear and sacred! When, children together, we slept in the same cradle, did not our common friend, the holy man who is now in heaven, did he not say that we were destined for each other? When cruel fate compelled me to leave thee to the temptations of fortune—too powerful for thy innocent heart—didst thou not promise to be mine? Did I not, the day when thou didst confess thy love, hold thee fainting in my arms, thy cheeks wet with tears, thy hand convulsively grasping mine? And if the temptations of a false world, the flattering guile of a selfish man, was too much for thy unsupported faith—if in a moment of weakness thou swervedst aside, hast thou not redeemed the fault? Holy Virgin! is the oath that united thee to *him* more sacred

than that which bound thee to me? No, Lydorie, thou art *mine!* Come, come then—let us fly! We shall find in Hainault a sure asylum—nothing can molest us there—all will be joy and peace!"

Lydorie wept bitterly, but made no answer.

"Come, come! let us away!" continued Severin, impatiently yet tenderly, and drawing his weeping companion closer to him. She raised her head which had been sunk on his shoulder, and exerting all her self-command, she at length spoke.

"Severin," said she, "is it then indeed you who give me this advice, who thus urge me to ruin? Oh, is not misery enough for endurance, without shame? You, who so often told me in happier days that true love was holy virtue, that it lived not but in purity, and died in dishonour? Severin, were I now to follow your mad advice, or listen to your frantic proposal, in how little time would you look on me with contempt—how soon would my presence be a burthen, my very love the nourishment of your remorse? No, my dear, dear friend, we must part!—and for ever! Farewell, farewell!"

She darted from his embrace, entered the pavilion, and firmly closed the door. He felt her withdraw from his arms, he saw her light figure vanish from his side, he heard her words and her steps as she fled along the path within the garden, yet he neither spoke nor stirred. While he stood thus motionless and dumb, a sudden cry for help roused him from his torpor. A mechanical movement of courage made him grasp his stick firmly, and he hurried off in the direction from which the cries and the clashing of weapons proceeded. He soon reached a retired spot, where by the dismal light of an almost expiring torch he saw a man defending himself with a short sword, against the attacks of two assailants. Just as Severin came running up, shouting encouragement to the single man, one of the cowardly assailants fell to the earth, and the other abandoned the contest and fled.

"May St. George be your speed, good friend! You have saved my life!" said the unknown, in French but with a foreign accent which struck Severin as English—and it was such. "But for you it was all over with me. I am hurt, but I think slightly. Let us leave this place—that

runaway may bring others to attack us. Complete your good deed by supporting me to my house, which is hard by—I bleed freely—come on, kind sir! What are you groping for near that writhing wretch, who seems at his last gasp?"

"I am only seeking for my toque, which fell from my head this moment."

"Haste, haste away, good friend—yon villain and his fellows will be soon on our track—come, come! I will give you a hundred toques for the one you have lost!" and, the wounded man leaning on Severin's arm, they both walked away.

After some minutes they arrived before a portal, which the stranger quickly opened by a spring; and securely closing it again, he uttered a short sentence of thanksgiving for his escape. A courtyard was soon passed, and then several rooms of a large and handsome house, in which the whole family seemed to have retired to rest. At length they came to a chamber, richly furnished and lighted up, and in which sat a lady of noble mien, but whose countenance was strongly marked with a melancholy expression.

At sight of the stranger, pale, almost stagger-

ing from faintness, and covered with blood, she uttered a scream, and flew towards him, with every mark of agitated affection. Severin heard the following conversation, but understood nothing of it, for it was in the English language.

"'Tis nothing, Isabella—I feel that the wound is but slight—compose yourself!"

"Oh, Aymond! what wretch has done this?"

"Your kind brother, Charles, the handsome and bountiful, King of France, by the grace of God! He must have all his titles from me on occasion of this ceremony of assassination," said the wounded person in a bitter and sarcastic tone.

"Can Charles have been so base?"

"Aye, Isabella, aye! Two men bearing his household livery, and one of them of high rank—for I saw his glittering star and collar as I struck him down—have just waylaid and wounded me, and but for this young man's assistance I had now been without life and you without a protector."

The lady threw a look full of gratitude on Severin.

"But this danger is not the only one which besets us," continued the stranger. "Frightened by the threats, or bought by the gold of Hugh Spencer—that bitter enemy which, by God's grace, I will one day pay for this!—your brother has signed a treaty, by which he pledges himself to deliver you up again to Edward—and what is the vengeance which the tyrant King of England has in store for the wife who left his arms for mine? Need I dwell on this, or rouse your fears? As for me, Isabella, this attempt proves that there is no intention that I should accompany you to England. My county of Kent is too rich a heritage to allow those who would despoil me of it to let me live!"

"Oh, Aymond! for myself I fear not Edward's revenge or my own suffering—but to snatch thee from this peril, say, what must be done? What is our resource?"

"Instant flight—nor is even that sure. I know we are beset with bravos and assassins—but we must risk something to escape from worse."

"And where turn our steps—and when?"

"To Flanders—this very night, this very

hour, my Isabella, or it may be too late. My faithful Harrys is already on before—I warned him to be ready, for I suspected what was coming. He is at a few leagues distance, with some fifteen or twenty Englishmen at arms, devoted fellows but whom the jealous fears of your brother would not suffer to be lodged within the walls of Paris. Once with them we shall be safe. We may then easily reach Hainault, where Count John will be sure ot give us protection and succour."

"And how, Aymond, to pass the intricate ways of the city on a night so gloomy as this?"

"'Tis not easy—the scoundrel guide sent to me by Harrys, fled when the murderers attacked me."

With these words the Earl of Kent turned towards Severin, who had stood a silent observer and uninformed listener of what was done and said. To the questions, whether he knew the streets of Paris well enough to find out the road to Hainault in the dark? he readily answered "yes," and a heavy sigh accompanied the word, for he thought of his own late project of flight.

"Put me and this lady safely on our route, kind comrade, and I will reward you well."

"I want no reward—I am ready to do you this small service."

"Away, away, then! and God and St. George hold us in their keeping! Now, Isabella, courage and energy! Go, seek your son, and the most valuable of your jewels—one casket only, for we must not be encumbered. I and this good youth will soon saddle three horses—and then all is ready!"

After a short time, spent in washing away the blood and applying some hasty dressing of lint to his wounded side, the earl hastened to the stables with Severin. The Queen of England was quickly ready, with her beloved son in her arms—her dearest treasure. In as short a time as it was possible to employ on such an occasion, the party was fairly out, and in such speed as prudence commanded them to use. At first they went at a slow and steady walk, in order not to excite suspicion or alarm to the patrols of archers and halberdiers who might be encountered in the narrow streets; but once the gate of the city passed, and that was accomplished without hindrance, they pushed forward at a good round trot; and when the paved fauxbourg was

cleared and the sandy road alone beneath their horses' feet, a smart canter brought them quickly out of all danger. But it was nearly daybreak before they felt themselves to breathe freely. Silence was natural to their respective states of mind. Few words were spoken, except a kind and soothing inquiry at times, from Isabella to her lover, when he could not suppress a groan from the pain caused by his wound. The child, who was carried carefully before Severin, firmly placed on a rolled up cloak, slept soundly for whole hours. At length the Queen, interrupting the deep silence, turned towards Severin, and said, "Now that we are safe and free, and assuredly not far from our escort, had you not better turn back, generous young stranger? If they discover that you aided our flight, your life may not be safe."

"My life is not worth preserving, madame—I have lost all which could give it any value."

"So young and so unfortunate! How is this?"

Severin gave a brief sketch of his adventures and his hapless passion for Lydorie. His recital deeply interested the Queen. The modest and

ingenuous affection of Lydorie, on which Severin dwelt so tenderly, was a bitter reproach to her whom passion had so far carried away as to make her expose to the scandal of two powerful kingdoms her guilty connexions with her husband's brother.

Her heart was grievously oppressed at that moment; and she raised her eyes, which swam in tears, on him for whose sake she had sacrificed her honour, her happiness, her conscience, and her throne. She sought for consolation in his looks, but found it not. A sarcastic smile played on his pale face, and he addressed to Severin a few phrases of raillery, on the weak prejudices which had persuaded him to abandon Lydorie for ever, rather than risk her remorse by urging her more forcibly to quit her husband's roof and fly with him.

While the Queen listened to his ironical, and she thought heartless words, a horrid doubt for the first time assailed her. She asked herself if indeed this man for whom she had so suffered, loved her sincerely; or whether he had not plunged her into the abyss of disgrace from the

cold calculations of ambition? The question was too painful for examination then—too deep for solution perhaps ever. She turned away lest she might see in the heart-betraying expression of his features the answer which she asked for, yet dreaded to receive. Ah! this anguished moment and the like, were the expiations inflicted by Heaven for the criminal enjoyments which to the eye of the world were allowed to go unpunished.

And now the travellers came up with the faithful domestic and the expected escort, who waited for them at the place appointed. The Queen gave to Severin a valuable ring, which she told him to keep in remembrance of one to whom he had done such good service, and of the boy he had so kindly taken charge of. The Earl of Kent took him aside;

"Young man," said he, "in assisting us as you have done, you have perhaps done yourself a service as well as us. This is not the moment to entrust you with the perilous secret of our names. The less you know of us now, the better. But let our blessed Lady and St. George but

have us in their keeping, and you shall one day remember with joy the actions of the night we have passed together!"

At these words he rejoined the escort; and Severin, throwing a wistful look towards the Hainault road—yet irresistibly drawn back to the scene that was to complete, as it had begun, his destiny, slowly retraced his way to Paris on the noble steed which he whom he had served insisted on his keeping as a token of his gratitude.

CHAPTER VI.

At the epoch of these events, under the reigns of King Edward II. of England and Charles IV. of France, the latter surnamed *Le Bel*, from his being, as an old quaint Chronicler expresses it, "*gent de prestance*," and having "*grand appetit d'amour*," the art of painting was confined to a cold, clumsy, and mincing imitation of nature. The few pictures of that period are particularly deficient in that spirit of animation which is now the very soul of the art. The painter of those days, wishing to give a representation of life, stamped his efforts with the imprint of death. The portraits seem likenesses of painted corpses; and figures meant to represent action, resemble so many skeletons, fixed in a given attitude and covered in the prevalent costume.

The chief use of the art during the fourteenth century, was in its application to the embellishment of manuscripts. In the miniature orna-

ments with which they were adorned, the patient talent of the rubricator produced admirable results, and reached a most extraordinary height of perfection. In examining the rare and precious specimens of such works, which now remain preserved in almost all their original freshness, we gaze with astonishment at the rich colours which sparkle and glow over the page, surrounding the capital letters with a halo of gold and azure, dividing the columns of close and regular manuscript, and terminating in some exquisitely finished ornament below them. The mixture of bright with less dazzling tints forms a combination of which modern painting gives no idea; and the sight would be soon tired and dazzled by so much splendour, did it not in turn repose on the broad margin of white or cream-coloured vellum.

But the beauty of the art was all confined to the skill with which its brilliant colours were thus arranged. The subjects represented, particularly when human beings were included, were the miniature details of a preposterous bad taste. Whether it was some saint with a gilded halo round his head, or a knight of chivalry

armed for the lists, or the author of the book kneeling at the foot of some pope or bishop, whose stiffened hands are standing up in the gest of benediction, or a feudal chieftain with long flat streams of hair parted on his forehead, or a jester in cap and bells with a jay on his wrist—parodying his master's falcon—all wear the same intolerable air of inanity, and present a total absence of all that is inspiring in human life, or interesting in nature. Men-at-arms, castles, rivers, trees, mountains, all jumble together in a close confusion—for perspective had not yet lent its magic to the art.

An illuminated manuscript was in those strange days, when intellect was so advanced but civilization so imperfect, a valuable treasure. Nearly seventy years after the time we treat of Charles VI. of France possessed but six volumes in his library. And many a chieftain of high lineage and high fame for feats of arms, having by great favour been allowed to examine these rare wonders, returned to his feudal castle and told his gentle dame of the marvellous embellishments in the majestic tomes, paid for so highly to some obscure monk or nameless clerk, but

which he, high and mighty warrior that he was, would have blushed to be thought capable of reading.

From all this it may be supposed that the profession of rubricator was very lucrative; for rare as was the accomplishment of reading, that of illuminating manuscript was infinitely more so. It was often, then, while in the practice of his art, and in the enjoyment of the luxuries and goods of life which it produced him, that Severin blessed the memory of the good Canon Watermetz, whose name was, alas! associated so closely with that one which formed at once the blessing and the bane of his existence.

Returned now from his abrupt and adventurous expedition, and his thoughts perplexed between wonderment as to who his new acquaintances could be, and what their sudden cause of flight, and with the far more absorbing subject of Lydorie's resolute abandonment of him, and the best means for making her renounce her cruel decision, he sat down before the large table, where pencils, colours, gold leaf, and plaquets of foil, with the other utensils of his art were spread.

But in vain did Severin hope to gain quiet and calm in the labours of his profession. His turbulent thoughts rose up and ran riot, despite his repeated efforts at application; and he felt relief rather than annoyance at hearing the vociferations of a noisy crowd, which had entered the street and seemed gathered for some specific object in front of the house in which he lodged. As he approached one of the narrow casements in order to look out, his chamber door was violently burst open, several armed men rushed on him, bound him with cords, dragged him forcibly away, and followed by a furious mob, who heaped on him insult, abuse, and execration, he was finally placed within a prison, and thrust into one of its most loathsome dungeons.

Bewildered, confounded, yet almost looking with apathy on his fate, he was roused up by the reopening sounds of his prison gate, just as his dungeon door was on the point of being closed. The ruffian gaoler wished to give one additional pang to the suffering prepared for him—but with it he gave a new impulse to his existence. Turning his eyes in the direction of the grating bolts and bars, and startled by a re-

newed yell of savage imprecation from the mob without, he saw a female figure carried forward, her delicate arms bound, like his own strong limbs, with cords, her fainting frame resting in the clasp of a fierce man-at-arms. "Heavens! Ye saints of glory! can it be?" Yes, it was Lydoric!

He would have sprung forward—but the gaolers pushed him into the gloomy dungeon, the door closed with a heavy sound, and he fell insensible on the floor.

For three whole months the wretched Severin lingered in his dungeon. No human face ever met his anxious glance, save that of his gaoler, a wretch chosen, it would seem, not less from his brutal disposition than his repulsive aspect. Insensible to every appeal, he never answered one word to Severin's desperate inquiries as to the charges against himself, or, what affected him a thousand fold more acutely, the fate of Lydoric. At times, indeed, as if inclined to give some relief to his half-maddened mind, the gaoler would prolong his visit some minutes beyond the usual time; and while laying down the scanty supply of food, enough to keep body and soul together

from day to day, he would seem to listen more earnestly to the prisoner's pleadings; but then, with diabolical refinement, he would give a fiend-like smile, or burst into coarse laughter as he retired and fastened the bolts and bars.

Innumerable conjectures floated on Severin's brain. But the most settled of the several notions that seemed to bring conviction was, that the two strangers whose flight he had so effectively helped, had, for some selfish motive of security, sacrificed him to their own enemies. And he concluded, that for some inexplicable cause they found it politic to implicate the innocent Lydoric, as a pretended accomplice in the measures which he alone had effected. How bitterly did he now regret the confidence he had placed in those strangers! But what a relief was it at the time to unburthen his overloaded heart? And who could have suspected persons of their evident high rank, apparent candour and cordiality, and whose only probable feelings towards him should have been those arising from generosity and gratitude?

But it was too late for regret—too soon perhaps for despair. The flickering light of Hope

was still alive. And the very circumstance which so aggravated his suffering on personal accounts, brought an antidote with it. The fact that Lydoric was implicated in his fate, convinced him that while his was undecided, hers remained in doubt. And there was a deep but dreary element of consolation in thinking that she still inhabited the same mournful mansion with him, and the atmosphere of misery around him seemed purified and brightened, by the belief that she was in it too. With this feeling—one of those heaven-sent consolations which accompany almost every variety of suffering—Severin, tired out with the torturing agitation of thought, used to fling himself on the damp straw of his dungeon, and dream bright visions, which had probably not floated o'er him had he pressed the downy couch of a palace.

One morning his door was opened; his gaoler entered us usual, but he was followed by four men, one of them in the costume of a legal functionary. After scrupulously ascertaining that the prisoner's chains were securely fastened on his emaciated limbs, they ordered him to follow them, and they all quitted the dungeon.

It was spring. The air was soft and clear. The sky brightly blue. In quitting the infected spot where he had crouched so long in anguish, a thrill of joy rushed through the prisoner's frame, as though the inspiring breath of heaven had found a free passage through every pore. He for a moment forgot all past misery, all present danger, and had the thread of life that moment snapped asunder, he had died a death of perfect happiness. So far for the physical susceptibility of the man—but one lightning flash of thought, bringing back the image of his adored Lydorie, as he last saw her, turned all this riot of sensation into the still calm of despair. His chains once more weighed him down. His heart sunk again, and he walked on, or tottered rather, his feeble limbs scarcely able to support their load of woe.

After traversing several streets, he was conducted to a large building, called by courtesy the seat of *justice*. He was soon in the presence of those tools of tyranny whose voice was to decide his fate. The crowd who attended to witness the trial received the accused with their usual yell of anticipating condemnation; and as

he took his place on the seat allotted to the unhappy culprits, who were doomed to the mockery of judicial inquiry in those days, a new shout from the ferocious mob caused him to raise his eyes and look around. He beheld Lydoric, loaded with chains, but a beam of joy and beauty flashing across her pallid cheek as she caught his view. He strove to dart towards her; but the guards held him down on his seat; and she quietly occupied hers, with looks of love and confidence alternately fixed on him or thrown up towards heaven.

Some introductory forms being gone through, the principal judge addressed the two prisoners as follows:

"Severin Magalouffe and Lydoric de Lens, Countess of Coucy in your own right, listen! You, Magalouffe, are the murderer of Sir Eustace de Lens, a brave and worthy knight, late in the service of his Majesty King Charles, and deputy intendant of the palace, a high and honorable place in the royal household. You treacherously waylaid him in the night, in the near neighbourhood of his own residence, aided by yonder criminal, his wife, who met you by

appointment there, to do this bloody deed. The provost and his marshals and men-at-arms, in carrying off the corpse of the murdered knight, found on the spot this green velvet toque. Well may you start with horror at this silent evidence of your crime! Within the folds of its lining was concealed this slip of parchment, traced with these damning words, 'This night. Severin, when the curfew sounds its warning -- fail not--'tis the last'--the last hour my husband has to live, was no doubt what her guilty hand would have written, were' ye not already on that point agreed! The words are traced by you, Lydoric de Lens, for fatally true it is that you were early and foolishly taught the art of writing, which was never meant for women's knowledge, but suits best the holy monks, whose duty is to preserve and propagate the blessed scriptures and the works of the saints; or the learned clerks and doctors, whose business is to expound and transcribe the laws of the state. This false step in your early bringing up has led you now to conviction. Let it be a warning to those who hear me, to bring up their daughters in that wise ignorance which is suitable to every

woman educated in the fear of God, and the simple duties of her estate in life. Severin Magalouffe, what have you to answer?"

Severin, overwhelmed by the weight of this unlooked for accusation, to which appearances lent such a colour of truth, could not, unprepared, as he was with arguments or witnesses, attempt a useless defence. For himself he saw there was no hope. His only thought was of Lydorie; and he exclaimed in a steady voice,

"She is innocent!"

"He confesses his own guilt—Put it down in the scroll!" said the chief judge. "And you, Lydorie, Countess of Coucy?" added he.

"Heaven be my witness. I am innocent of this foul crime, and Severin also!" said Lydorie in timid but unfaltering accents.

A shout of indignation broke from the auditory, and the judges shook their heads and frowned at this perverse denial of guilt. Lydorie saw that it was in vain to oppose her feeble words to their pre-determined obstinacy. She sat down therefore in silence.

Severin at sight of her hopeless resignation, and in the pictured horror of her approaching

fate, recovered all his energy. He again stood up, and in a clear and determined manner related all the circumstances and events which bore upon the case. But the judges listened in incredulous indifference; and from all parts of the assembled crowd exclamations of disbelief and vengeance were heard.

"They are guilty! They are guilty! Revenge, for the barbarous murder of Sir Eustace de Lens!" and such-like sounds reverberated through the lofty hall. The judge then stood up to pronounce the sentence*. It condemned

* To the curious in matters of judicial and legislative atrocity we give the following literal extract from this document, which condemned Severin Magalouffe and Lydorie, Countess of Coucy, "etre justiciés de trois manières, savoir; à être trainés sur un bahut, à trompes et trompettes, par toute la ville, de rue en rue, et puis amenés devant la maison de la dite Comtesse de Coucy: en cet endroit ils seront liés sur une esselle *(échelle)* haut si que chacun petit et grand les pourra voir; et aura-t-on fait en ladite place un grand feu. Quand ils seront liés on leur coupera la main dextre et senestre, arachera la langue, et crèveras les yeux. Après quoi, on les jettera au feu, pour ardoir, *(bruler,)* et après leur sera le cœur tiré hors du ventre et jeté au feu: après que les dits Severin Magalouffe et Lydorie, Comtesse de

Severin and Lydorie, found guilty of murder and adultery, to a cruel and ignominious death, on the morning following the trial. It was heard in silence by the two prisoners; and was hailed with loud shouts of approbation by the blood-thirsty mob. After it was pronounced, the business of the day was declared to be over. The condemned criminals were dragged away to their respective dungeons, and the judges retired to the enjoyment of their evening meal.

Coucy auront ainsi été atournés, on leur coupera la tête, et seront-ils découpés en quatre quartiers, et envoyés en quatre meilleures rues de la cité de Paris."

CHAPTER VII.

THE Hotel St. Paul, the palace of King Charles, was a large and straggling building, or rather a collection of buildings, purchased from different owners and united together by connecting balustrades and corridors, and it stretched along the borders of the river Seine, not far from the scene of the events so important to the now desolate Severin and Lydoric.

In the most distant portions of this palace was a large court planted with trees, in the midst of which a fountain threw up an artificial stream of water, which fell down again among the foliage, on the surface of a broad basin, with a monotonous and melancholy sound. All the windows which looked upon this court were defended by wireworked trellice, to prevent the intrusion of a quantity of pheasants, pigeons, and other birds, domesticated in the place.

It was in a small tower or pavilion at the

extremity of this court, so adapted to the quiet purposes of a dormitory, that King Charles slept soundly and late, for the bright rays of sunshine had long lighted up the rich curtains of gold brocade which enveloped the regal couch. Suddenly the noise of a heavy and hasty step echoed on the marble pavement of the corridor; and, though almost stifled in the thick matting of rushes which covered the floor of the anti-room, the movements of the intruder were still audible, as he passed the pages with an air of authority, and made his way up close to the sleeping monarch.

"How now? Who is there? Who breaks in on my rest thus early?" cried the imperative king, with the ill temper so natural to all men on being so disturbed. "By my Patron, this is too bad! Do my chamberlains and pages stand at my door for nought, halberd in hand or sword at side, while I am at the mercy of every intruder? Ha! good Cousin, is it you?" continued he, on recognizing the grave and deliberate physiognomy of Count Philip of Valois looking grimly through the curtains.

"I bring news to your Majesty, enough to

make you rouse from your slumbers, aye, and to keep your eyes from closing for a night or more," replied the Count of Valois, with a harsh and somewhat presuming tone.

"What then are these evil tidings? Cut short my suspense and your own pleasure in brooding over them," said the angry king.

"'Tis briefly, your Majesty, that a messenger has just arrived from Hainault bringing, in troth, bad news. Count John with his men at arms, on landing in England with Queen Isabelle and Kent her paramour, was warmly welcomed by the turbulent barons. The chief men among them quickly raised their banners for the Queen. King Edward and Spencer, besieged in Bristol, were soon taken prisoners. The captive monarch is held close and fast by Lord Berkely, while the hapless minister was executed on the spot."

"By St. Mark, good Cousin, this tale comes quick and glibly from your lips, as though it pleased you well! What more? How fares it with my sister? Who is in power?"

"Queen Isabelle is proclaimed regent of the kingdom, in place of the king, who is declared

unworthy to reign. Earl Aymond is now all in all—the Queen is regent; but your Majesty need not learn who rules over her. Remember, sire, he bears in his flank the mark of the blade which Sir Eustace de Lens meant for his heart, and be not surprised that he means to make a pilgrimage to our Lady of Paris, who preserved his life—thirty thousand English pikes and as many men at arms to carry the torches in his procession."

"A truce, Philip, to your sarcastic air and words—this is indeed bad news! How quickly all this has passed!"

"Aye, by my faith, more quickly than we may complete our preparations for the threatened visit of outrageous Kent."

"What is to be done?" asked the king, in great agitation. "What force to oppose to this enemy who never pardoned a wrong? How raise supplies?"

"Force! there is none,"—resumed de Valois, "and as for supplies for the empty coffers of the state, you might torture, flay, and hang Lombards and Jews to the last man, and not get a

rose noble—witness the obstinacy of Gerard de Guette and many more."

"I will throw myself at once on the great nobles," said the king.

"They are more likely in this juncture to throw themselves on your majesty. The great vassals and feudatories of the crown are your worst enemies. They are gained over already by English gold; and even those that might be faithful are exhausted by their petty wars."

"Isabelle loves me still—I will depend on her."

"Remember, sire, your discourteous reception of her here so lately, when you aimed, through your creature's hand, at her lover's life."

"By the blessed saints! Count Philip, I cannot bear your taunts—you drive me mad!" exclaimed the king, springing from his bed and pacing his chamber in a very undignified mood. "Have you nought to advise? No consolation? No resource? I still reckon on Isabelle"——

"Your majesty is about to lose, this very day,

all chance of her intercession to avert this threatened calamity."

"How is that? What mean you, Philip?"

"The provosts and judges have condemned and are going to execute a man who, without knowing whom he rescued, was the means of saving the life of the Earl of Kent, the night that de Lens fell in the attempt to assassinate him. A worthy priest has just now told me all the details, having come from the prison of the innocent man, to implore my good offices with your Majesty for his pardon."

"How are we to know that Isabelle cares for this culprit's life?"

"Here is a ring, which I readily recognize for hers, given by her to the youth in token of gratitude—I received it erewhile from the hands of the priest." And then, at the king's request, Count Philip entered into an ample explanation of the adventure by which Severin and Lydorie had been so seriously implicated in her husband's well-merited death.

"Isabelle loves the marvellous and romantic," said the king to himself in deep reverie, when the Count of Valois had concluded. "Enough,

Philip!" continued he, addressing the count. "This tale tells marvellous well. Give instant orders that at noon precisely this officious youth, who stepped between me and my just intentions towards Kent, be brought to the church of Nôtre Dame, to do full penance for his crimes—be even this charge unfounded—and afterwards carried to execution!"

The count gazed on Charles with stern astonishment; and attempted to address some remonstrance on this act of manifest tyranny.

"Do as we have ordered, Cousin!" interrupted the king, with more than usual peremptoriness of tone; and to cut short all rejoinder on the part of the count, he called his chamberlains and valets, and directed them to dress him in all speed.

When the confessor of the prison returned from his visit of intercession to the Count of Valois, deeply afflicted with its result, and considering in what terms he could best prepare the unfortunate Severin for his fate, he found him in a crisis of fierce excitement.

The previous day he had been calm and as it were overwhelmed by the weight of an

inevitable evil. But when, after having made his confession to the good priest, the latter informed him who were the distinguished personages whose flight he had assisted, and that he saw a clear means, if time were but afforded, of proving his innocence and that of Lydoric, an uneasy and anxious feeling of delight seemed to possess him. The poignant impatience which succeeded during the night and on the following morning, caused an agitation approaching to delirium.

At length the door of his dungeon was once more opened. The old priest appeared. His sorrowful looks and eyes filled with tears told the condemned youth that no hope was left him.

Then it was that the ungovernable rage of despair completely o'ermastered Severin. He sprang from end to end of his dungeon, he lugged and clanked his chains, he struck his head against the walls, and vociferated screams and imprecations. Neither the gentle voice of the priest nor the robust exertions of the gaoler had power to calm his fury, till he sunk bleeding and exhausted at their feet.

"Oh, my son, my son!" exclaimed the holy

man, "If human power condemns and punishes us wrongfully, is not the justice of Heaven waiting to recompense us for our sufferings here below? Accept, with resignation, the crown of thorns of mortal woe, to receive one of unfading glory hereafter! Think of your manifold sins, my son, and repent in time!"

"And *she*, *she!* What are her sins? She, who is pure as the angels of heaven! And they are going to destroy that beautiful form, in open day and in the gaze of the monstrous brutality of mankind! Let me loose—set me free! There is no justice on earth or in heaven!"

At this blasphemy the saintly old man signed himself devoutly with the sign of the cross, and vowed a nine days' office to Our Lady of Grace, if by her powerful influence she deigned to save the poor sufferer from such an excess of despair.

"Oh, my dear child," resumed he with great emotion, "do not die in blasphemy and as abandoned miscreants might die! Reject not the holy palm of martyrdom in virtue's cause, which the blessed angels prepare for you. Innocence is virtue, and you are innocent! Oh, die not thus! For such a death would be to inflict on me, who

have laboured night and day to console, as I could not save you, an everlasting recollection of anguish."

"Oh pardon, pardon, holy father! But it is so frightful to think of!—Oh! if I could die alone! But she! she!"

At length the good priest contrived to bring the suffering youth to a state of comparative calm; and when the executioners came to lead him away, they found him kneeling before the holy man, who stooped over him, blessed him, and wept aloud.

According to the custom of those barbarous times, when every outrage was added to embitter the pangs of tyranny's victim, the prisoner was bound on a hurdle and thus drawn amidst the insults of the populace to the church of Nôtre Dame, where, according to the orders of the King, he was to undergo the species of penance known by the name of *amende honorable*. An immense crowd filled the church in all parts; and contrary to custom in like cases, Severin was led into the choir, across which a long black curtain was suspended, as if to add gloom to the melancholy scen

While Severin was placed upon his knees in front of the curtain, it was slowly drawn on one side, and Lydorie, dressed in the splendid apparel of a bride, suddenly rushed forward and with a hysteric scream of joy threw herself into her lover's arms. Severin quite overcome, lost for a while all sense of woe or joy.

When he came to himself, Lydorie was still there, supporting his wounded head, embracing his forehead and bathing it with tears of rapture mixed with dread. Many persons richly clad, among whom were ladies who wept and smiled at once, surrounded Severin. His arms were released from their cords, and they had instinctively folded themselves round Lydorie's waist.

The King—for Charles himself was present—gazed on the scene with the interest which the author of a mystery might have taken in the representation of his work, while it was acted by the holy brothers of his convent.

"Now, my Lord Bishop," said he to a prelate who stood by in full pontificals—"now celebrate the marriage; the time is come!—And here is the dowry which we give with our royal

hand to this noble dame, full restitution of her rights, full reparation for her honour, full enjoyment of lands, estates, and privileges falsely forfeited to the crown. And here is a patent of nobility for this brave and injured youth in name of our dearly cherished sister, the Queen Regent of England. For be it known to all men, that it was he who saved this beloved sister from danger and perhaps death, when we were most treacherously instigated to wrath against her. But this, alas! is the fate of princes—too often do wicked counsellors make them walk in evil ways!

"My Lord Robert of Artois," continued the wily King, after a long-drawn sigh and turning to a young prince who stood at his side—"it was not you assuredly who wert cause of this our almost fatal error. Your voice was always raised in favour of our dear sister, and we thank you for it now. To you then be entrusted the joyful task of communicating the description of this scene to Isabelle of England. Tell her how truly and how well her brave preserver has found protection and gratitude at my hands!

"And now, my Lord Bishop, proceed. And

with this ring, the gift of my ever-beloved sister to this gallant youth and which has served to discover the mystery so nearly fatal, be the nuptial rites performed."

The marriage was duly celebrated. The monarch and his court retired. Severin and Lydorie were escorted in triumph to a richly decorated suite of apartments, prepared in the royal palace. And the populace, who had so lately hurled their insults and imprecations so unsparingly on an innocent victim, were now with much difficulty restrained from tearing in pieces the judge who had condemned him and who had been attracted by curiosity to his window to see the triumphant procession as it passed.

THE CURSE

OF

THE BLACK LADY.

A LEGEND OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

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" KNOWEST thou, Jam Steen, if yonder skiff in the offing be the craft of Peter Meerman; she that has been four days missing—as might well be looked for from her sailing out on Friday?"

" Hadst thou only used thy sound eye and not strove to blink through the other, thou hadst seen that her sharp keel and upper rigging are not Flemish," answered gruffly the man thus questioned. " Aye, as I thought," continued he, after having attentively peered at the vessel through his half-closed hand, " she is certainly English, and——"

" I think so too," said the first speaker, interrupting the sentence, " and it is *that* that made me so dubious, for it seems marvellous

strange that one of King Edward's ships should venture on our shores since the Black Lady's seizure of the wools, and his reprisals."

It was in a solitary spot on the coast of Flanders that the preceding dialogue took place between two fishermen, who, while they were employed in drying their nets on the strand, watched what would to a landsman's eye have seemed but the shadow of a ship on the distant horizon. The view around was bleak and wild. The only evidences of vegetation were a few stunted briars, with here and there a thistle struggling through the sterile soil, which occasionally rose into irregular ridges that served as a boundary to the encroachments of the sea. But for these natural dykes it would long before have totally inundated a district so flat that those ungraceful inequalities served as a relief to the dreary and widespread desolation. The signs of human occupation were confined to a few oven-like huts scattered on the sands, the abodes of some of that amphibious class to which belonged the two individuals whose conversation we have just reported.

"Hey! what now?—'Tis a signal for a boat,"

continued the first of those speakers, resuming the subject and answering his own question, while he dropped the net he had been handling and hurried to the beach. The signal was not unobserved by others, nor disregarded by any. In a little while three boats were seen plying towards the vessel, two of them guided by our colloquists, and presently a fourth appeared from a more distant point.

When Jam Steen, in his little and clumsily built boat regained the beach, it was freighted with a lady extended on a kind of couch, her head carefully supported by a man dressed in a cloth of Bruges mantle, trimmed with minivar, and a velvet toque garnished with a heron's feather. Another, in the costume of a Knight Templar, aided this person to render the short course of the boat as little fatiguing as might be to the sick lady, who by the richness of her attire seemed to be of high rank. The three other boats were filled with attendants and baggage; but the notice of the stragglers who, one by one, collected on the beach, was particularly attracted by two Africans, whose woolly heads and unpre-

possessing visages furnished a theme of revolting wonderment to the untravelled Flemings.

As the Templar and his companion came on shore the crowd gradually fixed their attention on the latter, who, having thrown off his cloak, appeared habited in the fashion of the Low Countries; but his tunic and hose were of the finest materials, while a massive gold chain and rich medallion stamped authority on his air of proud command. His short and grizzled hair, his thick moustache, and marked and prominent features soon, in fact, caused him to be recognized as Guy de Dampier, Count of Flanders. His attendants quickly placed his lady-wife in a litter, hastily prepared; but scarcely was it put in motion, in the direction of Bruges, accompanied by the Count and his companion and followed by gazing groups, than it was met by a new comer, who approached Count Guy with an exclamation of surprise, while he folded him in an embrace of dubious cordiality, and gave a salute rather familiar than friendly to the Countess.

"What, Baldwin! You here to greet my un-

looked-for coming?" exclaimed the Count, breaking from the loosely clasped arms of his half-brother. How is it with you, and how with the Lady Marguerite, our mother?"

"For myself, Guy, I am as usual, neither well nor ill, neither rejoicing nor sorrowing, enjoying nought yet venting no complaint, filling a high station as though it were not mine, and zealously performing duties which it seems a mistake of fate to have imposed on me. As for our—*your* mother, let me rather say, she has ever since your departure held on her harsh and rigid course. Shut up in the close recesses of her palace, scarcely seen, never heard, the darkest gloom oppresses her. Subjects, duties, glory, seem all alike forgotten or despised."

"And this affair about the seizure of English wool, of which I heard obscurely in yon vessel?" inquired the Count anxiously.

"Alas!" said Baldwin, "our mother, imperious as inexorable, has hurried on that ruinous measure and scorns to flinch from the evils it provokes. The embassy to England for payment of the old claimed subsidy was indignantly refused. King Henry, though old and feeble,

spiritedly rejected the demand. The Lady Marguerite, rousing for a moment from the lethargy of grief, seized on every cargo, every bale, every bundle of English wool within the state, though much of it had passed into the hands of her own subjects."

"And was there none near her, Baldwin, not *one* to urge the madness of the measure? To shew the ruin of exasperating our most powerful neighbour, whose alliance is a vital necessity of our existence? Without English wool, our manufactories may crumble and our weavers starve!"

"You, Count of Flanders, by your firmness and your martial character, have, I must own, obtained much influence over the mind of the Lady Marguerite; born as you were of her second and less unfortunate marriage than that which gave me birth," replied Baldwin of Avesnes. "And yet I'm not at all assured that had even you been here to interfere with the first movement of her resentment against the King of England, that the claws of your Lion had not been clipped as close as the tongue and nails of my brother's Griffin here, when he dared to oppose her will. Bethink you then what

would have been my fate, whose very name recalls the injuries she suffered from my unhappy parent, had I once dared to interfere!"

"Enough, enough, good Baldwin. I know too well, that towards thee and thy haughty brother no mother's love glows in her bosom. Yet, methought, as she is not ignorant of thy ability in the transaction of our court affairs, she might perchance have listened to thy counsel. But tell me then, what followed upon the seizure of the wools?" inquired Sir Guy de Dampier.

"Before any other steps were taken on the part of the English, King Henry died," replied Baldwin. "But Edward, his successor, still absent on the crusade, sent orders that all our vessels in the English ports, together with the Flemish merchandize of every description which was found within his territory, should be seized and sold, and that the money arising from their sale should be divided among those whose goods had been confiscated here; and yet more, he forbade any farther exportations."

"But we can still get their wools from Brabant, from Holland, and from Germany?"

"Nay, nay, think not that England's king,

aided as he is by his faithful counsellors the Commons and rich burgesses, is to be thus over-reached."

"Why not?" impatiently asked Count Guy.

"Because," replied Baldwin, "when they found we made large purchases from Antwerp, Flushing, and Hamburg, the King of England issued an edict to forbid the exportation of wool and wool fells altogether; and he has besides now invited our artisans to go over with their looms to England, where a large premium and powerful protection await to welcome them."

"And do the greasy varlets, forgetting our protection, seek another master?" asked the Count, angrily.

"When want and misery stare him in the face, when the hungry manufacturer finds by the privation of his food no strength of body to support the mind's resolve; when he sees his infants starving around him"——

"Enough, enough!" cried the Count, stamping furiously, but his brother firmly continued:

"Add to this information, your knowledge of the Flemish character. Free even to madness with their governors, and proud of their loyalty,

as soon as they deem themselves oppressed, their clamours are proportionably loud, and epithets of the most injurious nature are lavished on those to whom they impute their wrongs. Our mother, though she has given them many useful laws, and has bestowed so many regulations advantageous to their commerce, lives, like some eastern despot, enclosed within her palace; seldom viewed, even by the Hainaulters among whom she resides, and never visible to the Flemings, whose counts of former times have lived among them, followed their usages, and conformed to their characters, and have at least listened to their complaints, if they could not redress their grievances. The people have therefore taken the Lady Marguerite in abhorrence."

"Abhorrence!"

"Yes, Guy: though she be my mother, and as such commands my duty, however little she be sensible to the claims of nature, 'tis necessary that you know the truth. They speak of her as one entirely destitute of natural sensibility: they palliate my father's severity—nay, frown not, Count of Flanders,—they hint at some dark practices, and they designate her so frequently by

the epithet of the 'Black Lady,' that many, I am persuaded, both in Hainault and Flanders, are ignorant that this is not really her title."

Count Guy looked the astonishment he really felt. For some moments he remained silent, pondering over all that had been said, and then changing the conversation, asked, "And have many left our coast for England?"

"The edict is of too recent a date to have been very widely extensive in its effects. Two or three families of Bruges have been imprisoned, detected in their efforts to expatriate themselves. But what avails it? Hunger is stronger than prison walls! There are continually watches for the arrival of strange vessels, and it was the intelligence that one of English seeming was in sight that brought me to the coast."

"And the Countess?" said Count Guy.

"I have already said, and you need not be told, that unsupported by you, Count of Flanders, I dare not seek to tell her vexatious news," replied Baldwin.

"Tut, tut, man. Do I not know that your politics reach to the inmost recesses of her palace?" observed the Count, laughing.

"If it be so, I reserve the secret for confession; and I think that you have not yet taken the tonsure," replied Baldwin, in the same tone.

"And my rich town of Bruges?" said Guy, with some hesitation.

"Nay, Guy, spare me, I pray you, the mortification of telling you of what your own eyes will too soon read. But more than all, I fear Edward's anger."

"Fear!" exclaimed the Count, haughtily, "*I* fear him not, but I dread the effects of his measures upon the trade and consequent prosperity of my country."

"Pardon me, Guy, if I have used a word unfit for the ears of one educated in the court of the noble Henry of Brabant, and who has fought with so much glory in the Holy Land. But now let me ask, how is it that you are here landed on this wild spot, brought by an English ship; without troops, almost without attendants, and of all the noble companions of your departure, how comes it that not one returns; that your only gossips are a woman and a Templar, and that you have doffed your knightly harness?"

"I'll tell thee, Baldwin. After St. Louis's death——" began Count Guy.

"St. Louis!" interrupted his auditor. "Then the different reports of the disastrous issue of the expedition are but too true?"

"Yes, he's dead," replied Count Guy. "And he died not in the front of battle beneath the enemies' attack, when his surrounding warriors might have raised a noble monument to his fame in the dead bodies of his foes piled up around him, but he drooped, wasted and worn by the burning sun and horrid climate; and he died surrounded by puling monks and weeping women, and warriors worse than either, who cried to bear them company!"

"Then France, as well as England, has a new king. Think you not that Philip will give up Labrosse?" asked Baldwin.

"Believe it not, for though I hunted the dying Louis almost to his grave—though I appealed to his justice—though I besought him not to permit his son to begin his reign by protracting an act of injustice towards the first high vassal of the crown—though I took upon me your character, and represented how degrading to France

it was, to stake at once its peace and honour upon the detention of a miserable *barber*, all my arguments were unavailing. But I will have my revenge! I swore unalterable, deadly hatred towards his son; and may this right hand fail me if I forget the oath!"

So much was the Count agitated while making this narration, that every muscle in his stout frame seemed in motion, and his hands clenched and unclenched with a rapid nervous agitation.

An indescribable emotion played upon the countenance of Baldwin. Yet, though his countenance was radiant with a smile, his mouth was closely compressed. He remained silent, while Count Guy seemed glad to drop the conversation; and turned his eyes on the crowd by whom he was surrounded. The survey was any thing but pleasing. No frank and loyal cry, as of old, hailed the presence of the prince. But a discontented murmur ran along the stragglers who still kept on his path, as he and his cortège moved away. As they approached Bruges, with its wooden, party-coloured houses, the numbers increased, but yet no friendly greeting met his ear, greedy of the expected sounds. The streets

were thronged with loungers; not as in former times, when the busy multitude, either in careless haste or with engrossed countenances, pursued their path of pleasure or of gain; but each now paused, with wandering gaze, to spy his neighbour's bearing, or peer on the stranger, with the vacant look of hopeless, thriftless idleness. The creaking and humming sound of the loom no longer gave evidence that the houses were filled with busy hands, each one bringing riches and support to the state; but the oiled paper, which at that time supplied the place of window-glass in most of the burgesses' houses, hanging in torn strips and fluttering in rags to the wind which rushed through the tenantless manufactories, seemed to the troubled view of Count Guy as if hung out to mock his entry, in place of the silken pennons of other and better days.

The spacious market-place discovered men, women, and children placed in quiet endurance on the bare earth, supported by the rough walls of the surrounding houses. The Cloth-house was shut up; and the Water-mart, an immense hall, through whose extensive walls a canal poured its obedient waters, was entirely closed, and gave no

sign whatever of the store of wealth which was formerly unshipped within its shelter. All spoke the ruin which had followed his short absence.

"And this," he cried, "is the winding up of the eighth crusade, so proudly undertaken, and so boldly supported. My wife's health enfeebled, my own treasures buried in the ocean, my brave followers gone to guard it there, or left to rot in Pagan lands! And here, where I had at least trusted to find repose after such trials, I meet at each step some memento of my people's lost love and wasted treasure!"

He descended at the ancient palace of the counts of Bruges, instead of the more princely residence of Winendale, which was a short distance from the city, and whose twelve fortified towers, together with the magnificent draw-bridge and other suitable appurtenances, rendered it the most costly and remarkable building in the Low Countries.

CHAPTER II.

The Count and his two companions were soon seated at table, in an apartment fitted up in a style worthy of the richest country in Europe, for so Flanders was then considered. The walls of the spacious apartment in which the Count had chosen to repose and refresh himself and his friends, were hung with the gilt leather which was then one of the staple commodities of Bruges; the chairs being also covered with the same rich material, then of recent invention. The windows, though high and narrow, and composed of stained glass, were so numerous, that the light, though softened, was not obscured. The rays of a splendid autumnal sun, playing on the grotesque gilding of the hangings, reflecting the rich tints of the coloured glass, produced a gay and pleasing effect. But the Count himself was moody, and vainly endeavoured to shake off the gloom which the untoward events of the

last few months had produced. At length, filling his goblet and inviting his companions to do the same, he said, somewhat abruptly, to Baldwin—"Think you the leech who has been sent to the Lady Gertrude has skill to treat a malady unlike those of our colder climes?"

"Our mother is so assured of his well-practised skill, that she thinks to invite him to Mons, and she only delays it, seeing that she is herself almost exempt from those trials that demand his care," replied Baldwin.

Count Guy left the room.

The Templar, after a moment of thoughtfulness, said, "Count Baldwin, is then Master Labrosse, who formerly enjoyed the confidence of the Lady Marguerite, dead?"

"It must be many years since you were in these countries, Sir Knight, if you needs be told that Labrosse left Hainault, and threw himself upon the protection of the King of France. He died at Paris, but his son was so much favoured by the late monarch, that he is supposed to be on the road to the highest preferments."

The Templar paused again before he asked, "What could induce Labrosse to quit the protection of the Countess?"

"He was employed by my mother in a very delicate affair; and distrusting her promises, or having been previously gained by others, betrayed her."

The Templar was again silent for a few minutes. He rose and walked some turns quickly up and down the immense apartment, as if irresolute. At length he stopped short, directly in front of his companion, and said "Remember you the beautiful Ada, your father's ward?"

Baldwin started, and the Templar thought he perceived him shudder. "Too well I do remember her," replied he.

"And does she still exist?" said the Templar, leaning so forward in his anxiety for Baldwin's reply, that he almost touched him.

The politic Baldwin paused a few moments, and then replied evasively,

"If you knew her, you must also be aware, that soon after the unfortunate divorce which deprived us of our birthright, though we were

acknowledged to be legitimate, she quitted the protection of the Countess my mother."

"And have you not heard of her since that time?" said the Templar, somewhat impatiently.

"They say that she went to the Holy Land," replied Baldwin; "but I am quite ignorant of her fate."

The Templar drew yet nearer, and lowering his voice almost to a whisper, said, "Did she not perish in the dungeons of Mons?"

Baldwin, rising slowly from his chair, faced the Templar, and said, "No, Sir Knight! of that crime, at least, the Lady Marguerite is innocent." While he thus spoke, his face flushed crimson, and his voice expressed at once surprise and indignation.

The Templar extended his hand to Baldwin, and said, "Enough, young man, I am satisfied. I knew your father."

"My father!" repeated D'Avesnes, taking the extended hand, "and can you then lift the veil that conceals the mystery of *his* fate?"

"That can I," said the Templar; "for 'twas

I that closed his eyes. It was I who heard his last words, and who am the bearer of his blessing."

"Then he *is* dead!" said Baldwin. "Oh! what a singular fate is mine! The second son of a Countess with three princely dominions, I am '*sans terre*,' though my younger brother be a rich and powerful prince and heir of my mother's broad lands. The legitimate born of a marriage that our church disowns, with both father and mother in existence, alas! I never knew the love of either. My mother hates me, and yet her most complicated business all goes through my hands!"

"The behests of Heaven are just, though inscrutable!" exclaimed the Templar. "Your father died a hermit and a penitent, in a distant land. Listen to one passage of his life, which may palliate his seeming cruelty in flying his wife, and abandoning you his child. Just after your birth, your father was called to France. Returning one evening from the vesper service in the cathedral of Laon, he was accosted by a Moorish minstrel, who throwing himself in his path, presented to him a ring and implored

him to save the owner. He knew it at once, for the Emperor Baldwin's——"

"My mother's father!"

The Templar continued, without heeding the interruption.—"The disguised minstrel, who was no other than the Queen of Bulgaria, who had freed your grandfather from his captivity, having loved him with a sister's love——"

"Fame says with a criminal passion, Sir Templar."

"I know it," said the Templar calmly. "But were you acquainted with the evidences to which your father was compelled to yield, you might judge her less harshly. She became entirely a Christian. The jealous fury of the king, her husband, left flight her only resource to escape an ignominious death, with total loss of honour. They fled together. Years elapsed; and they wandered from one concealment to another amid the most savage tribes, ere they could reach the civilized lands of Europe. After unheard-of perils, Baldwin arrived at the castle of Avesnes, emaciated and feeble, and not to be recognized but by the eye of a wife, or a child. He sent to Marguerite a chaplet of holly, which had been

formerly blessed by St. Guthred. Baldwin, she is your mother—but I must tell how her pride, and that dreadful selfishness which has so perverted her better nature, revolted from acknowledging him; and while the aged greyhound which he had reared fawned upon, his daughter spurned him from the door; and when the poor old man indignantly refused to quit the castle, he was imprisoned in the deepest dungeon."

"O God, her father!" said Baldwin.

The Templar continued—"The Moorish minstrel penetrated even to his prison. The guard who had formerly served him procured the implements for writing—he addressed a letter to your father."

"And he saved the Emperor!" said Baldwin, almost breathless.

"Your father flew to the prison. The seneschal led the way to the dungeon. The Emperor was lifeless. Baldwin, he had been *hanged*, like a common felon!"

"God! and this monster still exists! And I am her child! And I yet wonder that brother has lifted his arm against brother. That woe and misery are our portion!"

"Can you wonder that his wife became hateful to your father?" said the Templar. "From that moment he felt his accursed destiny, he sought to break his marriage. He threw himself on the Pontiff's mercy, and obtained a divorce. But ere the tedious delays of the spiritual courts were overcome, another passion had taken firm and fatal possession of your father's heart."

"Ah!" said Baldwin, "the unhappy Ada." The Templar made no reply, while his companion continued—"And for this fatal and criminal passion he forgot his children—left us to a mother's—to *such* a mother's hate!"

"Young man, you condemn with the coldness of a Stoic—"

"I feel, with the bitterness of a victim!"

"Listen awhile. When Ada was first introduced to the castle, to your father's guardianship, she was in the earliest dawn of beauty. All the graces of youth were united in her person. Her winning gentleness was particularly pleasing to the Countess, who kept her continually in her presence. Your father gazed upon her till a guilty passion filled his heart. He thought of the ties that should have secured her from his

love. Alas! he could see only the stiff and haughty Marguerite, with the blood of her parent on her forehead——"

"But us his children, young and then innocent," said Baldwin.

"We are none of us innocent in the eyes of the pure Being who suffers in our sins," said the Templar, mildly crossing himself. "He *did* think upon his children, but the image of the young and then equally innocent Ada continually stood between him and them. Yes, honour, duty, and virtue were all outraged in these thoughts. His conscience spoke aloud, he writhed beneath its stroke, but he did not fly the dangerous Ada. He wept, but the tears he shed were those of a guilty passion. Ada discovered her guardian's sufferings, and her bosom was filled with compassion. Perceiving that he desired to hide his griefs from the Lady Marguerite, that he looked upon her with kindness, she caressingly attempted to console him. She entreated him to tell her the cause of his grief. He cast down his eyes and remained silent. She took his hand with renewed entreaty, he snatched it from her, and tore himself away.

"When they next met, her eyes sought his with the soft glance of sympathetic inquiry, but she spoke not, perhaps timidity kept her silent; perhaps a deeper feeling. But he spoke not. His melancholy increased. Many days passed away, and she dared not question him on his silent sorrow; but one day, overcome by anxiety, when they were quite alone, she ventured to question him again. He lifted his mournful eyes to her ingenuous countenance, 'I love you, Ada,' he said, in a hollow and guilty tone. 'I have only one resource to save me from the frightful abyss on which I stand—Death!' She trembled,—she endeavoured to load him with the malediction his guilty passion seemed to merit. But a crowd of feelings pressed on her heart. She feared they might—Alas! she too surely felt they *would*—recoil on herself. She participated in his crime!"

Here the Templar paused. "Alas!" said Baldwin, "I can fill the next clause in your story, for often has it been made the subject of conversation in my mother's household. My father fell sick, and the Countess *made* Ada nurse him. Yet it is only now I learn that his

illness proceeded from the struggle of conflicting feelings."

"And do you remember that?" inquired the Templar, surprised.

"'Tis so faint and distant that it seems an ill-imagined dream, rather than an assured truth that my remembrance warrants."

"It was this," said the Templar, "that ruined both your father and the unhappy object of his passion, as you are about to hear. One day when she was quite alone with him, the invalid lifted his heavy eyes to her's. and said in a faint voice: 'O, Ada! I am devoured by a fever that consumes my heart. Could I only once press my burning lips to thine—only once receive the kiss of forgiveness from thee, I should die content.' She replied not. But perceiving that the eyes of the invalid were constantly fixed on hers, she bent down towards the bed and pressed her cold pale lips to his, saying, while her voice trembled with the feelings that thrilled through her heart and agitated her inmost soul, 'O, that I could die with thee!—I love thee!'

"He pressed her to his heart, and turning his eyes from her, fell into a deep and mournful

silence. 'Then,' cried Ada, in a voice in which despair penetrated through the hope she sought to impart, 'wilt thou not revive. Wilt thou not live for me?—I love thee!' The next morning he was better. In three days he was entirely recovered. You know what followed."

Too well, notwithstanding my early age, do I remember what has been a source of such lasting misery. And plainly do I recall the malady which seemed to wear and waste my father's life, before the divorce pronounced by the Court of Rome arrived. And *you*, doubtless, are aware that the same decree which pronounced my father's divorce, declared our legitimacy? I wept my father's loss, but my mother yet remained. Though even then but little of that kindly love which animates a mother's feelings was hers. We were attended to, but never with that ardent tenderness which more gentle natures display. Yet Ada, after my father's departure, remained to love and to caress us. But, oh! when Ada fled, never shall I forget the storm of passion that rent my mother's bosom. For months she would not see us, and when she did, 'twas only, she declared, that we might learn to hate and

curse our father! When she made a second choice, William de Bourbon Dampierre, a simple knight, and when his children came to dispute our rights, my brother, Jean d'Avesnes, was taken by the Count of Holland and reared as a warrior, while I was left alone, to pine and want a mother's love. Mine had quite forgot to smile. Companion she had none, save the sad sullen discontent which preyed upon her nature. She seldom spoke except to give an order. She knew no sympathy, nought of *one* feeling that humanizes our nature. Even in her marriage with Sir William, no communion of thought or sentiment arose; they seemed to meet only at table. Nought touched her rugged nature, either in approbation or dislike. The riches of the court, the charms of nature, the glory of her husband, who was the first warrior of his age, were to her as the vapour of the morning. She sought Ada every where. She sought my father, whose fate became a mystery to all. At length, by the death of her sister Jane, these fine dominions fell under her sway, but not until Dampierre too was dead: and her pursuit of Ada, which had been never slackened, became successful. She

was brought a prisoner to Mons. I was not present at their interview, but they say, the 'Black Lady' smiled!"

"And Ada?" said the Templar, somewhat impatiently.

"Ada was confined and watched with the closest attention," continued Baldwin. "Labrosse attended her; I confess, I thought, for some dark purpose. How he lost my mother's confidence, and why he fled to France, is still a mystery to me."

"That mystery I can elucidate," said the Templar. "When Ada fell into the power of the Countess, she was pregnant. Unsuspicious of this circumstance, and deceived by the symptoms of her state, Marguerite feared her health in danger, and that she should lose her victim. Labrosse soon discovered the truth; and the Countess gloried in the possession of two victims instead of one. He was appointed to take the child upon its birth. *I* saved the child.—But Ada! tell me of her."

"Where is the boy?" said Baldwin.

"The time is not yet come to bring him for-

ward," replied the Templar, impatiently, "tell of Ada's fate."

"The Lady Marguerite, you are well aware, was served from fear, and therefore badly obeyed. I found a means to send away her guards, and without being suspected myself, I set her free, for *she* had been kind to me. It was all I dared to do; the guards dared not acknowledge their absence from their post; and this circumstance has thrown an air of mystery over the whole adventure, which has given rise to various reports. Some say that she was murdered here, and that her spirit walks——"

"And have you never heard of her since?" inquired the Templar.

"Never of her nor of my father, except that her spirit has been seen in Brabant, wandering on the confines of our Hainault."

"How say you, Brabant?" inquired the Templar, thoughtfully.

"Yes, Sir Templar, such was the report. But I, who cannot think that the grave yields up its dead, or that the spirit unembodied walks with men——"

The Templar scarcely appeared to hear this remark, and he interrupted the speaker abruptly, "And did the Countess then never suspect the part you took in Ada's flight?"

"Alas! I have sometimes thought the hate with which I have so constantly been pursued has become more deadly since her escape," replied d'Avesnes.

"But how, if she hates you thus, is it that she so trusts you?"

"'Tis dire necessity, Sir Templar. So close does she live enclosed within the walls of her castle; so much she hates the sight of human kind, and more than all, the talk of glorious deeds, that men of talent, spirit, or probity have no means of finding access to her, from the simple reason that she knows them not, and will not know them. Guy de Dampierre, when he learned his trade of arms, learnt not to read or write. As to me, neglected by my mother, the Bishop of Liege, her suzerain lord, proposed to rear me for the church. This too, had been my father's intention. But I would not risk my father's fate and faults, for he was a secularized dean. Therefore I returned to my mother's sad

residence, and thus have I insensibly crept into employment, and have become so necessary that they cannot, if they would, replace me. The Lady Marguerite is distrustful. I have no power, no warriors, or warlike knowledge. Count Guy has both. She knows I love him not, and therefore——"

"And Count Guy," pursued the Templar, "does he feel or act as a brother?"

"Think you, Sir Templar, that he can forget or forgive being vanquished at Kapellen, being made our prisoner, and being kindly treated? Besides he loves his mother, because he fears her, and dreads even now to lose his heritage which he has usurped. He thinks that France, when he or Marguerite dies, will replace me or my brother in our rights. His mother excites his resentment against France, by cherishing this fear, for they have harboured Labrosse—Oh, how a dawn of light breaks in upon me—she thinks that Ada's child——"

"Hush, hush, Sir! The walls of palaces have ears!" said the Templar, in a low voice. "There is yet a mystery about this Labrosse, and his connexion with that court, which I cannot fa-

thom *yet*." Then, after a pause of a few moments, he added, "Said you not that it was in the state of Brabant that Ada's spirit walks?"

"And believe you, Sir Knight, in those old wives' tales?" said Baldwin, contemptuously.

"'Tis strange!" said the Templar, thoughtfully.

Baldwin's countenance expressed a mixture of surprise and contempt, but he spoke not.

"Young man," said the Templar, solemnly, "ridicule not what thou dost not understand. I tell thee, that if Ada be permitted to return to earth, 'tis there her spirit would assuredly be found. Be silent and be secret on this our conversation. I go to Brabant; but we shall meet again."

"To Brabant?" said Baldwin.

"Yes," replied the Templar, "to my convent at Brussels. Should you learn any more of Ada, or Labrosse, or of the court of France, in connexion with either, I may be able to serve you, in serving those who should be dear to you."

"*Dear* to me?" said Baldwin, mournfully.

"Would that I could divine the meaning of that term, which seems to make the happiness of heaven, if heaven there be!" Here the Templar crossed himself.

"Nay, Sir Templar, what *can* I know of love? Think of my early days, when my little heart expanded towards my mother—when my little hands sought to embrace her—to be repulsed with a cold shudder, such as women prove when an adder crosses their path?" said Baldwin, with concentrated feelings of bitterness. "My brother was early severed from me. The Dampierres mocked my early feelings with such opprobrious terms as their mother had instigated them to use towards me."

"Did you then never see your father? Never receive a token of his love?" inquired the Templar.

"When the two Dampierres fell into our hands, in their expedition against Zealand; when the Countess, wild with fury that we had snatched from them not only Hainault, which John d'Avesnes, my brother, must possess, but this rich golden fleece of Flanders; when Charles

of Anjou was invited to win these states from us her children; you know the justice of our cause prevailed. This Charles, who has since become a murderer to gain the crown he wears, was driven quite into France. A pilgrim from the Holy Land was sent by my father (so he said) and exhorted us to peace. My brother stoutly refused to yield up the advantages he had gained; and I was of his mind. I shall never forget the majesty of look and manners this pilgrim then assumed. He adjured us for the love of Heaven, he threatened us with the pains of hell, if we yielded not to the Countess. In short, my brother released the Dampierres—and peace was concluded."

"And what said the pilgrim?"

"He blessed, and left us."

"That pilgrim was thy father," said the Templar.

"Most surely 'twas my father," said Baldwin, after some moments of reflection. "Did he not speak of my mother's wrongs, though her guardian and husband? It was indeed my father—he blessed us both. Oh, why did he not disclose himself to us! 'Twould have been so sweet to

know and love him—why did he not disclose himself?"

"Since thou yet lovest him, think when those he loved come across you—Oh, think of him, and seek to deserve his blessing—adieu!"

CHAPTER III.

THE summer had passed away, and winter was drawing towards its close. It was an evening in February, when a knight, clad in complete armour, and followed by a single squire, paced slowly across the forest of Soignies, the ancient *Sonien bosch,* then spreading far and wide over the extensive territory of Hainault. They seemed to have missed their way; nor was it extraordinary; for though the season was so far advanced, a heavy fall of snow, attended by a high wind, had succeeded to the clear hard frost that ushered in the day; so that the road, never too well tracked, had now become quite imperceptible by the accumulation of snow-drifts.

Upon the shield of the knight, borne by his squire, was blazoned the Belgian Lion, at sight of which the enemies of the faith had so often trembled in Palestine.

Their horses, though noble animals, seemed jaded, and worried. The snow, which gathered

in balls under their feet at every step, became so troublesome as almost to prevent their advance, which in fact became so difficult, that the travellers were glad to accept the shelter, poor as it was, afforded by a cluster of the forest trees, growing so closely together, that their trunks formed a natural rampart, under the shelter of which both men and steeds seemed equally glad to repose.

"It is strange, Sir Knight," said the squire, "with the snow driving in my teeth, and the north wind howling around me, that my throat should feel parched with thirst, as when we were on the sandy deserts of Africa, and broiling beneath the rays of a noon-day's sun? Indeed one might almost believe, that some magical delusion is operating to deceive our senses, and that what appears to us snow, must in reality be sand; and what looks like the moon, dimly seen through the storm, must be the broad pale sun of those burning climes!"

"And," said the knight, interrupting his companion, "this goodly forest, which we believe to be a part of the domain of our mother the Countess of Hainault, may, when we awake

from our illusion, prove to be the mighty empire which fell from the grasp of my grandsire, the blessed Baldwin, crowned Emperor of Constantinople, but which he lost so soon, that it might, without any great stretch of imagination, be believed but an ideal dominion. Would, that when the morning dawns, we might be found going to take possession! I, as well as you, have been suffering from thirst, and would give the best sword ever forged in Brussels for a cup of such beverage as moistens the lips of the anchorite. My good Soudan, too," he continued, patting the neck of his charger, "is as thirsty as his master, I think. But, as I see no chance of finding our way from hence before day-break, he must e'en be content to share my luck, as he has often done before."

At this instant the storm, which had hitherto unceasingly beat against the natural rampart where they had found shelter, began to subside; and Hugo, declaring that his throat was more tormenting than ever, though his mouth was numb still with the snow he had crammed into it, in the hope of overcoming the thirst that consumed him, asked permission to pursue something like

a road, which the cessation of the fall of snow-flakes enabled him to perceive, in search of some reservoir of water. The permission, after some little hesitation, was granted, and our Knight was left alone.

Scarcely had the squire quitted his place by the side of his master, when the moon, hitherto obscured behind dark clouds, burst forth in all her brilliancy, and discovered to the astonished eyes of our Knight of Flanders a living female figure, clothed in black, standing immediately before him.

She wore the habit of the religious order of the Beguines, and her face was towards him, and now fully visible; for the bright beams fell directly upon her features. She was very pale, our Knight thought supernaturally so; or perhaps the lawn, with which the thick black veil that shaded her face was lined, might, by the reflection of its rays, heighten the effect of the pale light. She was motionless at first. But, while he gazed upon her, she lifted one hand, as if to engage his attention. The other was pointed towards heaven, doubtless to intimate, that it was the will of Him, who there rules supreme,

that she was called upon to declare. She spoke; and though her voice was low, her every word seemed to penetrate the very soul of the Knight, and to fix themselves on his memory, as if engraven there with a pen of iron.

"It is the Lord that commandeth the elements. It is the glorious Lord that maketh the thunder: gird thou thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou Most Mighty, according to thy renown! But why speakest thou against thy brother? Why slanderest thou thine own mother's son? Hast thou forgotten thy covenant? Hark!" she continued, motioning her finger as if to enforce attention—"Do they not seek to shorten the days of the youth, and to cover him with dishonour? Go to her, fast bound in darkness, who sitteth alone in her pride, and ask if she hath withdrawn her curse from the childless mother: if she hath forgotten the cry of the motherless babe? Go, and say to her, that she diggeth a pit for another, in her blindness, which she must fall into herself. And thou," she cried, raising her voice to a tone so elevated and so shrill that the Knight involuntarily shuddered before he caught the purport of her words; "And

thou !—aim not thy sword at the breast of the unacknowledged one, lest it strike thine own best hope. Lest—" and the expression of her face as she lifted it towards Guy de Dampierre, bore in every trait the imprint of a fearful imprecation: but while she glared upon him wildly, as if she would curse with a look, as well as with her voice, her eyes closed, her head drooped upon her bosom, her uplifted hand fell powerless by her side, her voice sunk to low murmuring sounds, the moon was obscured by dark clouds, and the figure passed away.

CHAPTER IV.

The castle of the Countess of Hainault at Mons was a complete specimen of the splendid architecture of the twelfth century, or that which is now called Gothic; pointed windows abounding in coloured glass, unpolished marble, heavy wooden doors, thickly studded with iron nails, leading into immense corridors, interminable passages, and branching staircases.

It was early in a morning of the month of February, that the horn of a knight was heard beyond the castle wall, and immediately replied to by the warder; and when the drawbridge was slowly replaced and the portcullis heavily withdrawn, a knight followed by a squire, whose surcoat bore the Flanders lion, entered. The cap of the knight was of black velvet, and slight bars of steel, bent into the form of a semicircle, crossed each other at the top of his head and served at once for defence and for ornament. His boots of thick leather reaching almost to the

knees bespoke him an inhabitant of a maritime country, having spurs formed of a single point of iron, long and obtuse, and these being gilt would have announced the wearer's rank in chivalry, even if his whole equipment and bearing had not proclaimed his right to the deference with which he was received. As he dismounted from his horse, he threw off the large mantle, not unlike the military cloaks of our days, and discovered the knightly armour, which shewed to peculiar advantage his powerful limbs. A straight black tunic without sleeves descended to his knees. It was fastened by a silver girdle, from which depended on one side a strong sword, and on the other a dagger, the richly wrought handle of which seemed to declare it of Turkish make. His arms and hands were covered with a steel tissue, sitting close and so flexible that it yielded lightly to every motion. The squire who followed him was old, and a certain familiarity was mingled with the respect of his manner, and seemed to declare that he had been long accustomed to his master. In truth he had served the father of our knight, and the latter had grown up beneath his attendance, which had

not unfrequently become his protection. His armour, far from adorning his person, scarcely left a human figure visible beneath its heavy plates of iron, fastened by nails whose monstrous heads seemed cast in the same mould with those which strengthened the heavy oak doors of the palace. His helmet seemed the section of a water-pipe of cast iron. Visor it had none; but in its place was a plate or bar of iron descending from the forehead to the chin, almost touching the nose and mouth, and he had a group of arms suspended from his saddle. It was Sir Guy de Dampierre and his squire.

The seneschal conducted them with much ceremony to the knight's apartments in the castle, where a small table placed by the side of an enormous log-fire in the middle of the room, and plentifully furnished with cold salted and dried meats, together with the thin wines of France, and the more potent juice of the German grape, soon made him forget the cold and thirst he had endured in the forest. The beer he quaffed with peculiar pleasure, as it invitingly foamed in a silver tankard, which had been thickly embossed by the abbot of Wansfort, and

presented by him to the Emperor Baldwin previous to his embarkation for the Holy Land.

Having praised the flavour of the beer and helped himself to some slices from a well cured wild boar's head, he said to the chamberlain, "And Baldwin of Avesnes is not yet arrived, you say?"

"No, Count," replied the chamberlain; "we expected he would be with you."

"Why, my road lay through Namur, and he comes directly from Bruges. I marvel therefore he be not arrived—and I have news for him," said the knight.

The warder's horn was again heard; and after due time the person in question made his appearance. He looked harassed and fatigued, and gladly took the seat Count Guy pointed to, close by his own, and having stirred the logs which burned lazily in the huge hearth, he observed, "Methinks the wood emits this sulphureous vapour more strongly than ever. I marvel, Guy, that you have not repaid the compliment of the English king's invitation to your weavers, by bringing over workmen to build you some of those long narrow passages which, beginning

just over the fire, project from the top of the house to carry off the smoke."

"What mean you, Baldwin?"

"Nay, have you not heard that in England they are beginning to build along the end of the rooms, lodges or troughs to contain the fuel, on the base of which they raise a brick funnel, through which all the smoke mounts and so evaporates at the top of the house?" replied Baldwin.

"Think you then, d'Avesnes, that the whole room can be warmed with the fire at one end of it, particularly if the smoke be carried out?"

"Indeed they say," replied d'Avesnes, "it casts a strong heat everywhere.—But how goes the war?"

"Nay, my politician, but poorly; I am almost tired of it. What we gain one month, we lose the next," replied Dampierre. "When you and I, my brother, engage in war upon towns, we are sure to come off losers."

This referred to a conflict in which Baldwin had been engaged, and in which a town had been lost by his mismanagement, to the ruin of the cause. D'Avesnes understood the sarcasm,

a glance betrayed his feeling of its bitterness, but immediately repressing his resentment, he calmly said, "If this be really the case, Count of Flanders, why not seek some means to finish the dispute?"

"At present," replied the Count, "it seems rather necessary to consider how we should proceed in the council about to be held with my Lady Mother, touching this business of the wool seizure."

"The way is simple enough," said Baldwin. "It is but to make good the losses of the British merchants, to offer an apology to the young King of England, and to renew the treaty of commerce with him."

"But the Lady Marguerite, thinkest thou that she will so condescend?"

"That will she. Dost thou believe that the dame cannot relinquish her forced sense of pride when the finest jewel of her crown is at stake? No, no! You must make her understand the danger of the line of conduct she has adopted. You must make her consider the character of the Flemings, such as it hath ever appeared, and which is unchangeable as time."

"Hold, hold, Baldwin! How think you I can do all this? I can fight for Flanders if necessary; but not even for the sovereignty of that rich country could I *talk* for it. No, Baldwin, it is you who must explain the necessity of this case."

"Count," said d'Avesnes, rising from his chair and pacing the room as he spoke, "thou knowest thy mother loves me not. Thou knowest also that he who risketh this proposition is likely to be banished her presence altogether. I have no interest in Flanders! If the greasy burghers of Bruges, as those of Ghent have done, rise up to demand increase of privileges and force you to compliance, I have nothing in the stake to win or lose. Thus much is certain. If the trade be not restored to Bruges, the whole dependency will be in open rebellion."

Here he paused, as if waiting an answer. When Count Guy, his countenance flushed with passion, which he however strove to repress, said, in a tone of indignation resulting from the conviction that advantage was sought to be taken of the perilous situation of his affairs, "Well I ween this hesitation betokens some demand? Whatever 'tis, I grant it."

"Then," said Baldwin, forgetting his cold caution for an instant, "let her highness restore to me the lordship of d'Avesnes, and"——he paused awhile and then continued in a tone less firm, "and ask for me the hand of Mary of Brabant."

Count Guy looked up, as if doubting the evidence of his senses. "Mary of Brabant?" he at length exclaimed.

"Why not, my brother? The lordship of d'Avesnes was noble enough to entitle my father to be named regent of Hainault and guardian to its heiress. The nobles here will all aid you in my claims, nor am I without friends in the court of Brabant, as you may perhaps acknowledge when you recall who made the duke your ally, in this last paltry war, waged for a base serf and miserable cow——"

Here the chamberlain entered to announce that the Lady Marguerite waited them in the council chamber.

"Count," said Baldwin, "there is no time for hesitation—do you accede to my wish?"

The chamberlain was in waiting. Count Guy replied not, but he motioned dissent with his head, and then hurried to attend his mother.

In the tapestried room into which the brothers were conducted, sat the Black Lady of Brabant on a throne elevated considerably above the floor. The dais was covered with the same rich tapestry as the hangings which covered the walls, for even in this early age Bruges was celebrated for such manufactures. The draperies of the throne were of purple velvet fringed with gold, with a canopy and curtains of the same rich materials, the latter being looped back with a massive cord and tassels. The constable supported one side of the throne, and the seneschal the other. Below these were the cup-bearer and grand-huntsman. Six pages were placed about the steps of the throne, and the same number of ladies in waiting were also there. Yet Marguerite herself wanted not the surrounding magnificence to mark her superior dignity of "Countess by the grace of God," then accorded to only one county besides her own; for there was a sort of fearful majesty about her towering height, unbowed either by the weight of years (and she had already passed what the Psalmist has declared to be the age of man) or luxurious indulgence. Her face was pale and marked by

deep furrows, indicating an unlimited indulgence of the strong passions which had rendered her life so unquiet. Her eye was black, and retained all the fire of lively feeling, yet it was sunken. Her forehead was low, yet there was an inflexibility of resolve in its deep lines that added much to the majestic character of her appearance. Her teeth too were perfect, and her thin and colourless lips left them visible to attract the painful admiration excited by their contrast with the unlovely expression of her features; her chin was small. Her hair was all drawn from her face to the crown of her head and concealed under the black lace veil, which concealing the upper part of her forehead, fell over each shoulder even to her feet. Her upper garment was a long mantle of black velvet lined with ermine, which, opening in front, fell over the arms of her throne, and discovered a dress of crimson cloth of Bruges of that beautiful sort called *ecarlate*. The boddice was drawn tightly to her shape by rich gold cord, the ends of which, finished by heavy tassels, fell downwards to the edge of her robe. The crimson tunic reached only to her knees, and discovered

an under dress of white Syrian silk, on which was a border of gold, evidently of oriental workmanship. Her hard bust was covered by many rows of the finest Asiatic pearls, and depending from her girdle was a rosary of jet, which sustained a richly embossed golden cross, probably enshrining a piece of wood of the true cross from Palestine. The small gold crown which circled her brows, and the sceptre she held, were evidently made by the same skilful artist—probably the work of the celebrated Erembert, Abbot of Wansfort. Her arms, which notwithstanding her towering statue were disproportionably long, were covered by sleeves of the finest Bruges linen, which however only appeared at the shoulders and elbows, the rest of the arm being covered with the crimson cloth which formed the tunic, and these were laced with gold cord down to the waist, where the Bruges linen formed a cuff. Her form was harsh and bony, and no grace of motion relieved its outlines; for she was so fearfully still, you might have thought the living form had been placed in sight of the Gorgon's head and so transformed to stone. Her features seemed alike immoveable, all sunk

into a dark, fixed, and settled discontent with life.

The twelve peers composing her council were all assembled when Guy and Baldwin, conducted by the chamberlain, presented themselves before her. They made their bows, in advancing from the door to the lower steps of the throne, and kneeling upon which, they asked her blessing.

No member nor feature of the lady moved, nor did the slightest agitation which could betoken any feeling either of welcome or displeasure, appear either in her look or voice, as she slowly uttered, "Sir Guy de Dampierre, Count of Flanders and Lord of Namur, welcome from the Holy Land—take thou my blessing." Sir Guy slowly rose and took his seat at the council board.

Baldwin shuddered as he looked upon her rosary of jet, for he thought upon her father. Perhaps she thought upon *his*, for no blessing awaited him from her cold lips. "Baldwin of Avesnes, we invite thee to a seat at the council board," was all she uttered. He arose, and placed himself by his brother.

CHAPTER V.

While her chiefs are occupied in the council-chamber, we will return to Marguerite, who, though with children by two noble husbands, lived solitary and childless; and though reigning countess over two sovereign states, was left desolate in her greatness.

She was the younger of the two daughters whom Baldwin, crowned emperor of Constantinople, left in their infancy, on the third Sunday after Easter, A.D. 1204, when he set out to join the first crusade. In the following year he was made prisoner by the king of the Bulgarians, and was supposed to have died in his dungeons.

When the news of his death arrived in Europe, Jane, the elder, and consequent heiress to the rich states of Flanders and Hainault, was carried over to France, to be educated in the court of Philip Augustus; and she was in due time married to Ferdinand of Portugal, who returned with her to Hainault.

The great lords of Flanders and Hainault never loved the French, and they were displeased that their future countess should imbibe the maxims and politics of the court of France. In order to prevent any further innovation, they chose one of their own body to be regent of the states, and guardian to the younger child Marguerite. Thus Bouchard d'Avesnes, in the flower of youth, became her protector, and as soon as she became of an age to feel the power of love, she imbibed an ardent passion for him. If he did not return her passion, he was at least flattered by her choice, and grateful for her preference. He became her husband, and two children, John and Baldwin, were the fruit of this union.

Bouchard had been consecrated Dean of Laon, and was looking towards its future bishopric, at that time superior to the sovereignty of France in real power and riches, when the love of his ward arrested him in this career. When Marguerite least expected such a change, the court of Rome claimed its servant, annulled the marriage, but rendered the children legitimate.

Marguerite remained for months ignorant that

her husband had himself solicited the interference of the pope, and it was only when Ada fled that the appalling conviction arose.

Love in a rugged nature is a deep and terrible passion; with the Countess it was the only impulse not entirely selfish. When therefore she discovered his falsehood; she vowed an implacable, unmingled, deadly hatred against her treacherous guardian and faithless husband, and every thing dear to him. She nourished the hope that the day would arrive when she could make him know the agony he had inflicted on her. And with her curses were mingled vows never to desist from her purposes of revenge till they were perfectly matured.

The separation between Ferdinand and her sister Jane, rendered it little probable that any children should ever be born of this marriage, in defect of which Marguerite and her children were the immediate heirs of these rich states. She therefore determined on a second marriage, and chose William de Bourbon Dampierre, a simple knight, but of an illustrious family; and Guy de Dampierre and five other children were

born to her previous to his death, which however took place before she became, by the death of her sister, Countess of Hainault and Flanders.

Thus years passed away; but though her arm was powerless to execute it, her revenge slumbered not. The sons of her second marriage were become men, yet the direful feeling was not rooted out nor had it lost its character; and it was only when Ada was brought into her palace by the armed men appointed by the Countess to seek her out, that her sons had ever seen "the Black Lady" smile.

Ada sought to conceal her face. The Countess had the cruelty to force her to uncover it. Alas! no traces of her youthful beauty remained. Her form had lost its symmetry and lightness, and the remains of deep and stormy passions rested on her brow. Long and fixedly did the lady look upon her ere she spoke, as if she sought by a single glance to penetrate the depths of her heart, and to read not only her present feelings, but every passion which had reigned there since their separation. When at length her rage found utterance, it was with the deep concen-

trated tones of malice, hatred, and revenge that she vented the following fearful malediction. "Hear!" she cried, while her tall harsh form became yet taller, and her dark countenance became yet darker, from the mingled emotions of gratified passion and deadly revenge which raged within her—"Hear the curse which every night, ere my eyes have closed in rest, this voice hath uttered since I beheld thee not, which every morn my ears have drunk in greedily, more welcome than the softest music ere I have hailed the glorious rays of the returning sun. Hear this curse and tremble! May those eyes which have so long been wanton in unholy fires, become bleared and dim with tears! May that heart whose quick pulsation hath been quickened by unnatural desires, become callous and hard by suffering——as mine hath been!" And with these latter words the harsh didactic tone she had assumed changed suddenly to the quick shrill accents of despair. But immediately recovering herself, she continued, "May every limb fall listless and fail you in that hour when you need them most! May you tremble and flee

before the face of imaginary danger, but when real peril approaches may you be dead to its arrival! May your everlasting portion be with Judas the betrayer of the Lord, in the valley of death and darkness, when your fate here shall be fully accomplished! May this curse rest on thee and thine, till thou receivest my pardon: and may it fall in all its direful force on *me*, if ever I be induced to accord it! Amen!"

Many of the household of the Countess, besides the Dampierres, were present when Marguerite uttered this awful malediction. Her maidens threw themselves upon their knees, as if to deprecate its influence on those even who heard it. Her sons, with heads bowed low as if acknowledging her fearful power, were pale with consternation. And Ada? She crouched in silent horror, while every nerve seemed to be unnaturally distended: her lips were unclosed, her eyes straining from their sockets, her hands clenched, and her brow fearfully contracted. She spoke not—she scarcely breathed, and was at length taken out in strong convulsions.

After her dread curse was uttered, the lady

still looked upon her victim, and her features assumed an air of satisfaction. Then a smile— "Ha! and can you feel too?—I *have* felt—" and the emphasis was frightfully expressive. Having uttered these few words, she sought her loneliness once more.

When her first unholy and unfortunate marriage was dissolved, the eldest boy John had been consigned by Bouchard to the Count of Holland, to be educated in his court, where he won the affections of the Count's daughter.

For the eldest-born of the second family, Marguerite's feelings were called forth in an uncommon degree. He was a fine youth, and at the age of sixteen much advanced in all the manly exercises of the time. He was in person as near as possible perfect, and for the subtilty of his wit he was equalled by few.

This beautiful boy had not any apparent complaint, but he withered from day to day, as the rose fades beneath the canker worm. His spirits were uncertain; his appetite decreased; his eyes beamed with unusual brightness; while the healthy suffusion which once overspread his coun-

tenance, was now diminished to a little brilliant spot, just in the centre of each cheek. A dry husky cough rendered every movement painful, and his breath failed him at the slightest exertion. The superstition or wickedness of his attendants, imputed these symptoms to slow poison. The observer of consumption in modern days knows that it is Nature which mixes the draught.

Those who have watched the progress of that treacherous disease, wearing and wasting a fine and delicate frame; those who have cherished the hope, that deceitfully rises upon every change, to cheat with its brilliant illusions the friends whose happiness lives in the life of its victim, will, in the symptoms above described, have no difficulty in tracing its insidious attacks. Yet so gentle are the approaches of this inflexible malady, and, oh how frequently, so pure the object of its deceptive attacks, that there are moments in which it seems that a spirit from heaven is infused into the mortal frame, to purify and prepare the chosen votary for an early change from this rough and stormy world!

But not thus felt the Countess Marguerite. Irritated almost to madness by this sacrifice of the first of the Dampierres, to what she deemed the cupidity or ambition of the hated offspring of the false d'Avesnes, she prepared, by an immediate entail of the estates upon her second family, to cut off all hopes of participation. But John, the eldest son, strong in his alliance with the Count of Holland, who being at the same time king of the Romans, was suzerain of a part of Flanders and of the whole of Nassau, demanded, as first-born and legitimate heir to his mother, the settlement of all her dominions upon himself and his heirs.

The Countess received this demand at first in haughty silence; but when the Count of Holland prepared to support the pretensions of his son-in-law with an armed force, then her fury blazed out. She armed brother against brother, and prepared to support the right of Guy by every means in her power.

For two years did the unnatural strife continue, when St. Louis believed himself called upon by duty to put an end to a war in opposi-

tion to the first principles of human nature. He therefore offered his mediation in a way that neither party dared to refuse.

By the award of the French king, Hainault with all its dependencies was to descend to John d'Avesnes, after the decease of the reigning countess. But, as a punishment for his want of respect to his mother in waging war against her, the griffin in his armorial bearings was to be deprived of its tongue and claws. Flanders was to descend to Guy de Dampierre.

This award of St. Louis was displeasing to both parties. John d'Avesnes insisted that the pope's recognition of his legitimacy had made him the undoubted heir to both states. "You give me," he said to Louis, "Hainault, which does not depend on you*, while you award to Dampierre, Flanders, of which you are suzerain."

But as soon as the king went on his unfortunate crusade to Egypt, the war was renewed with increased violence. John d'Avesnes gained

* The Bishop of Liege was suzerain of Hainault.

Namur, but granted a peace at his mother's personal request.

Yet no treaties could bind "the Black Lady;" as soon as she saw a chance of success she renewed the war, and without any previous declaration, marched a fine army of 20,000 men to invest Walcheren. The Dampierres who headed this expedition, together with every man, fell into an ambush at Westkapel, and those who did not perish were made prisoners.

But John d'Avesnes seemed to be suddenly recalled to a feeling of the horrid nature of the strife in which he was engaged; he therefore offered to liberate the two Dampierres, and yielded himself to the award of St. Louis.

But the haughty inflexibility of the Countess spurned this arrangement. She received the letter in her council chamber, and having read it aloud, she tore it into a thousand pieces, and then collected and enclosed them in a blank paper without any message whatever; and sent to the Count of Anjou, brother of St. Louis, and offered to cede to him the whole of Hainault if he would conquer it from her son.

After a variety of success, the Countess was put in possession of her territories. Guy de Dampierre married Gertrude of Luxembourg, and received with her the province of Namur. John d'Avesnes was acknowledged heir to Hainault, and thus a peace was apparently ratified; but the seeds of jealousy and hatred had taken too deep root to be easily eradicated.

CHAPTER VI.

THE mercantile intercourse between England and Flanders began at a very early period; so early, that its date is lost in the obscurity of time.

Notwithstanding their commercial relations, the Flemings were very early a martial people; and their alliance was courted by different European states, particularly by the kings of England and of France.

So much was their military spirit esteemed, that many of our monarchs were content to purchase their alliance by annuities granted to different courts, and determinable with their lives. The contract was on both sides quite voluntary, and founded on mutual convenience; but the family feuds of Marguerite exhausted her treasury, while they rendered the raising taxes difficult and uncertain. In balancing the ways and means to supply the deficiences thus created, no

method appeared so congenial to her wishes as to assume the payment of this annuity as a right. Whether she depended upon the internal feuds of his kingdom, or the declining health of the English king (Henry III.), to bear her through with impunity, does not appear; but she demanded a settlement of arrears, which she pretended to have been some time due, amounting to almost forty thousand marks, previously to the death of the old king. Her claim was instantly and indignantly rejected.

The haughty and imperious Countess, regardless of the consequences to herself or her people, seized all the English merchandize in her dominions, though three-fourths of it had already ceased to be English property.

The English king had immediate recourse to retaliation, and by the seizure of Flemish produce raised the sum of eight thousand pounds, which he divided in different proportions among the English merchants who had been the sufferers from the loss of their goods. At the same time the exportation of wool and wool-fells to Flanders was forbidden. He also invited the

Flemish clothiers to come and settle in England, and offered a premium to induce them to accede to his invitation.

Notwithstanding his prohibition, it was discovered that wool and wool-fells were still introduced into Flanders, through the means of other foreigners. It in consequence became necessary to have recourse to strong measures, and upon the death of his father, his successor, Edward I., forbade, under severe penalties, the exportation of wool altogether.

When this edict was issued, Edward was absent in the same crusade which proved fatal to the French monarch. But the conclusion of a truce with the Saracens for ten years, enabled him to return to England. And as he was returning through Sicily and Naples he received intelligence of his father's death, and he hastened his preparations for his return to his own dominions, in order to make the arrangements necessary for his coronation.

The decisive measures he had employed, so clearly evinced his sense of the conduct pursued by the Countess Marguerite, that her obstinacy

was for once subdued. She consented to make the apology the king of England insisted upon, as the preliminary step to an accommodation; and Edward consented to receive her ambassadors at Montreuil, upon his return from the capital of France, where he had been to render homage to the young king for his lands held under that sovereign.

The Countess appointed Guy de Dampierre and Baldwin d'Avesnes to this embassy, and they were accompanied by several Flemish noblemen. They found Edward attended by John of Brabant, who had agreed to his invitation to accompany him to Montreuil, in his way to Brussels from the French capital. At Montreuil a deputation of English merchants awaited to aid him with their advice.

Thus was he surrounded and attended by many of his highest nobility, when the brothers were introduced. Edward received them standing, one hand resting on a table; a position in which his majestic height appeared to peculiar advantage; and the young king shewed himself by no means insensible to his personal attractions.

for his finely turned limbs were well set off by the white knitted pantaloons which he wore. His tunic was of richly embroidered velvet, and his toque placed gallantly upon one side of his head, was ornamented with a single ostrich feather, fastened in by a diamond aigrette. There was an assumption of lofty superiority about the expression of his countenance, different from vulgar pride or vanity, and which seemed rather to proceed from an internal consciousness of high deeds and lofty daring, than a wish to impose the belief on others; a conviction which the splendid reputation he had already acquired seemed well to warrant. The marked consideration with which he treated the merchants in his suite, shewed a capacity to emancipate himself from the prejudices of his age, together with a thorough acquaintance with the only means that could raise the English nation to that pitch of greatness to which her commercial resources has since raised her.

His eyes sparkled and his checks glowed when the Flemish deputation was first introduced; but he sought to master this emotion, and with the delicacy of a truly generous mind, endea-

voured by the studied courtesy of his manner to lessen the awkwardness of their situation.

When the ceremonies of introduction had been completed, Baldwin advanced one step nearer to the king, and said, "Sire, Guy de Dampierre, by the grace of God, Count of Flanders and Seigneur of Namur, is come before you to express his regret that the Lady Marguerite, his mother, should have seized the goods of your subjects. She conceived she had a right to make that seizure; but through respect to your Grace, and to obtain your friendship, she promised to make full reparation to the sufferers, and for the performance of this promise, the Count binds himself and his possessions to your Grace the King of England."

Edward gracefully replied, "Sir, I accept the offer made with so much humility by the Count, and with the greater confidence, because I know he was absent in the Holy Land when my subjects' property was seized, and I am informed also that he always disapproved the conduct of my Lady the Countess, his mother, which, though so injurious, we forgive."

Then calling the merchants in waiting to re-

capitulate their losses, it was agreed to accept the £8000 levied on the goods belonging to the Flemish merchants in England as a part of the reparation. And the commercial intercourse of the two countries was established upon its original footing.

During the continuance of this ceremony, Dampierre was too much absorbed in the interest of his mission to observe any thing beyond the general effect of the splendour surrounding Edward, and this seemed to him as if meant to reproach his disgrace. But when from the council-chamber they adjourned to the banqueting-room to partake of a luxurious entertainment, he startled as if he had beheld a spectre when he perceived Adenez Lekoi, the minstrel of the Duke of Brabant, before him. He was the living image of Ada. In vain he tried to persuade himself that his fancy deceived him, or that the resemblance was fortuitous. The nearer he approached the stranger, the more closely he watched him, the more striking did the resemblance appear. The same dark languid eye, with the narrow pencilled eyebrow, the voice,

every thing, even to the graceful indolence of attitude and motion, made the resemblance the more striking. The dark-minded Guy immediately made d'Avesnes acquainted with the nature of his observations, and the latter was himself astonished at the resemblance, and felt persuaded that there was some mystery attending the birth of the youth.

He therefore placed himself next to John de Waldenrod, one of the duke's gentlemen attendants, and as soon as an opportunity offered, inquired, "Who is this Adenez Lekoi, and how is it that you have never mentioned him to me?"

Waldenrod replied, "By St. Gregory, I could not divine that your Highness would care aught for this well-reputed minstrel!"

"Why, in sooth, my mind is in your answer to my question. Who is this Adenez?" repeated Baldwin.

Waldenrod replied, "He is a youth brought up by the good fathers of St. Benoît at Wavre, where you know the duke's natural son, John de Méluive, was educated. This Adenez, though

much older, is dearly loved by him, and the more so that they were both, the one and the other, intended for the frock; but Adenez refused to take the vows, and they say the boy was strengthened by Lekoi's repugnance."

"But his parents, where are they?"

'Nay, that is more than I can tell. There be various reports upon that head. It is thought that he too is a child of mystery and sin," continued the narrator.

"'Tis strange," said Baldwin to himself; then aloud, "What are his tastes?"

"In good troth I know but little of him, yet he seems to have made some fair advantages of his gifts. They say he is a great clerk, and as expert at the 'Gai Science' as the princess herself," replied Waldenrod.

"The Gai Science and in a convent!" said Baldwin.

"Why, you know, in Wavre nought but the Roman language is spoken, and the holy fathers there love the art. 'Tis certain that our Troubadour's harp was often employed, and that his talent in music is marvellous."

"And how does he spend his time?" again inquired Baldwin.

"Sometimes he paces for whole hours the cloisters of St. Géry; at other times he goes into the dark forest, and there, lying beneath the large old blasted oak that they say St. Hubert planted, he seems to forget the flight of time, and to care nothing for the wolves though they be so bold and so ravening that they come down even to the town," replied Waldenrod.

"But does he not mingle with the politics of the court? nor seek to possess himself of the duke's ear?"

"No, he scorns riches; but they say he is much attached to the princess, and in all honour greatly loved by her," replied the gentleman.

"Enough," said Baldwin, lowering his voice. "We are observed, keep your eye upon him, and be you sure the Count of Flanders, my very noble brother, shall not forget you. Your annuity shall be regularly paid. But let your intelligence come direct to me, not to Sir Guy, you understand?"

In repeating this account to Guy, all mention

of the forest walks were carefully omitted by the politic Baldwin, who immediately formed a plan in which he hoped to derive advantage from this circumstance, and congratulated himself that Guy's dread of the Lady Marguerite had prevented his before informing her of his project of a union with the Princess Mary

END OF VOL. I

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